

Israel to sign treaty banning chemical weapons

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel will sign a treaty that bans chemical weapons worldwide, Israel army radio reported Wednesday. The director general of the foreign ministry, Eitan Ben-Tzur, will travel to Geneva to make a formal announcement Thursday, the radio report said. Ben-Tzur's office confirmed he was leaving for Geneva, but would not comment on the radio report. The treaty took effect in April. It was signed by 165 countries, though only 88 ratified it. The United States, which signed in 1993, ratified it in May. Israel army radio said Israel had hesitated until now because of the refusal of some of its most implacable foes, including Iraq, Syria and Libya, to sign the convention.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الرأي»

British foreign secretary, Arafat confer

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat spoke Wednesday with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook about the crisis in the peace process ahead of a visit to the region by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, official sources said. The official Palestinian press service Wafa said Mr. Arafat briefed Mr. Cook on "the political situation and the peace process" amid preparations for Ms. Albright's visit. According to Israeli press reports, Mr. Cook is planning to make his first official visit to the Middle East later this year and in January Britain takes over the rotating presidency of the European Union, which has been seeking to mediate in the Mideast crisis.

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Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali speaks to reporters Wednesday on local and international issues. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour (left) and Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi also attended the press conference (Photo by Yusef 'Allan)

Majali says Netanyahu's anger may mean Albright has 'good' proposals

Prime minister reveals Jordan did receive Israeli offer to build dam on Syrian lands, which Jordan rejected, plays down complaints on Israeli-U.S.-Turk military exercises

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Wednesday said that he hopes that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will submit an initiative during her upcoming visit to the region.

Dr. Majali, who was speaking at a press conference, said he believes that Ms. Albright will bring "good" proposals to solve the deadlock in the peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Responding to a question that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was pessimistic over the Ameri-

can official's visit to the region, Dr. Majali said that the reported "anger" of Mr. Netanyahu over the U.S. secretary of state's visit "might mean that she has good things to offer."

"If Mr. Netanyahu is angry, it means that Ms. Albright has something good. If we (Arabs) are angry, then it means that there is something bad... therefore, we should not pre-judge things. She is coming, and she has many things to offer, if we like what she offers, we will take it," Dr. Majali said.

The prime minister said that Mr. Netanyahu's "anger" might be caused by the "speech" Ms. Albright

made in the past few weeks.

The speech of Ms. Albright focused on four elements that could be the cornerstone of a possible U.S. initiative to resolve the deadlock in the peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.

The four components include: a commitment to the land-for-peace concept, the complete fulfillment of interim agreements with the Palestinians, to restart once again the final status negotiations and to halt any unilateral actions by Israel on the ground, in other words, a complete stop to Israeli settlement building and expansion.

"Ms. Albright has made a strong speech where she said several things that drew his anger especially because they have a powerful (Jewish) lobby," in the United States, Dr. Majali said.

The prime minister welcomed any possible "initiative" by the U.S. to resolve the logjam, but said that Arabs "should not be in a hurry for such step because things need time to be ripe," he said, adding that "peace is an international strategy. The whole world is exerting pressure in this direction."

(Continued on page 7)

First paper convicted under new press law

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In the first case after the introduction of the May amendments to the press law, the weekly Al Bilad newspaper was Tuesday fined JD15,000 for publishing information that violates its provisions.

The Court of First Instance has sentenced Al Bilad weekly to JD10,000 and its former chief editor Nasser Qamash to JD5,000 in fines for publishing news about the security forces.

According to Al Bilad lawyer Mazen Majali, charges are based on the newspaper's publication of a news item that alleges Jordan had handed down to Israel the husband of Sonia Ra'i, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), who on return from Jordan shot and killed an Israeli

soldier at the crossing point between the Kingdom and the Palestinian territories.

"The news item was based on a press release issued by Agence France Presse. Most newspapers published it," Mr. Majali said. "At any rate, we intend to appeal the verdict."

Al Bilad editors and publisher claim they were not summoned by the court, nor were they informed of a case filed against them. Mr. Majali says the ruling was issued by the court Judge Tawfiq Qaisi without the publisher or his lawyer attending. Publisher Nayef Tawarah said he was "stunned" when he heard of the ruling because nobody at the newspaper knew there was a case filed against Al Bilad in the first place.

Lawyer Majali does not remember when the article on Sonia Ra'i was pub-

lished nor the details of the case, but assumes that the item was run sometime after the government's introduction of the new amendments to the Press and Publications Law on May 17.

It is reported that more than ten cases have been filed by the government against the press, the weeklies in particular, since the amendments to the press law went into effect May 18. Al Bilad's case, based on a violation to Article 40 of the law, is the first one to be tried and judged.

Fines for violating articles 40 and 42 of the law range between JD15,000-50,000.

Although fines in the old law did not exceed JD1,000 the government lost the majority of lawsuits it filed against newspapers between 1993 and 1997.

Israel to let go Egyptian prisoners in exchange for spy — press

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel will offer to free Egyptian prisoners in return for the release of an Israeli man convicted of espionage in Egypt, Israeli army radio reported.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office denied the report.

The report comes amid a furor in Israel over an Egyptian court's decision Sunday to convict and sentence Azzam Azzam, a member of Israel's Druze Arab minority, to 15 years with hard labour for espionage. Mr. Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders have insisted that Azzam, 34, was not an agent of any of Israel's security services, and have repeatedly appealed for his release.

(Continued on page 7)

Opposition says dialogue dead; Majali threatens to go to court

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Tug-of-war between the government and opposition reached new heights on Wednesday with opposition leaders describing the dialogue between the two as "dead" and accusing the government of "shutting all doors" and, on the other side, the prime minister threatening to take them to court if they called for a general boycott.

"The law says that those opposing or trying to influence the freedom of the elections will be punished by court. Such a law exists and it could be applied against people [who] use indirect approaches [to influence voters]," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted Dr. Majali as saying.

Nevertheless, "the door is wide open for dialogue, as Jordan is everybody's homeland," Dr. Majali was quoted as saying at a press conference held at the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation.

"The government has met [with opposition parties that intend to boycott the Nov. 4 polls] and opened a dialogue with various political shades in the country, because it is aware of the

importance of dialogue and its positive impact on the political life and democracy in Jordan," Petra quoted the premier as saying.

Dr. Majali reportedly stressed that the government was keen on involving all political groups in the coming elections, because "it is in the interest of everyone."

However, "everyone is free to have his/her own opinion and no one can impose anything on others, since the Constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to elect and is not obliged to," Dr. Majali said.

The prime minister was quoted as criticising the Muslim Brotherhood's decision to boycott the upcoming elections as "ironical."

"Ethics of dialogue [rules that] if one party has different views, it should first discuss them with the other party, and then take the suitable decision. But pre-judging and taking a decision before opening a dialogue, this is ironical," Dr. Majali told reporters.

"We have now three blocks: Those boycotting, those who choose conditional boycott and those participating," the premier said, adding that "those boycotting the elections have decided to meet with

the government individually and under their terms, but the government waited for them to change their minds."

Commenting on Dr. Majali's statements, opposition leader Salem Nahhas, secretary general of the Hashd Party, accused the prime minister of "trying to convince the public that we [the opposition], and not the government, are responsible for the failure of the dialogue."

Political parties and groups of independent personalities belonging to the pro-boycott opposition front "agreed that the government does not want dialogue" in a meeting held yesterday at the headquarters of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), IAF senator and Executive Committee member, Abdul Latif Arabiyat, told the Jordan Times.

"They agreed that the government is not really interested in dialogue and that it closed all doors [for talks]," Dr. Arabiyat said, adding that "this is a very critical time" for government-opposition relations.

The opposition leaders' meeting was held shortly after Dr. Majali's press conference began and participants were not aware of his statements when their

meeting started.

"We did not know what the prime minister had said (in the press conference), but that does not really matter, because we know his stand by now," Mr. Nahhas commented.

"He is trying to fault and blame us for the failure of the dialogue, make us look as if we did not want dialogue," he reiterated, adding that "such behaviour [Dr. Majali's] is not a responsible one."

The government held talks two weeks ago with representatives of the boycotting opposition parties and with Muslim Brotherhood overall leader Abdul Majeed Thmeibat. Last week, Dr. Majali and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour met with leaders of anti-boycott opposition parties and the pro-government National Constitutional Party (NCP). The opposition parties determined to boycott the elections, criticised the prime minister for involving parties not adhering to the boycott and accused him of hiding behind "an improvised tactic of collective dialogue" to avoid a direct confrontation with those in favour of the boycott.

(Continued on page 7)

Prince Hassan urges Russia to launch Mideast peace initiative

MOSCOW (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday urged Russia to launch a multidimensional initiative aimed at giving impetus to the peace process in general and to revive negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track in particular.

Addressing a press conference jointly with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov upon winding up his two-day visit to Moscow, Prince Hassan said that a comprehensive move is needed to ensure for each party its own rights and revive the peace process on all tracks including the Lebanese and Syrian-Israeli tracks.

He said that Russia is eligible to play a very important role in the peace process in view of the

credibility it enjoys in the Arab World and its relations with Israel.

Prince Hassan who left for Prague after concluding talks with the Russian leaders said that his discussions mainly covered economic and trade issues.

Expressing Jordan's desire to promote its ties with Russia, Prince Hassan said that Jordan is looking forward to a serious Russian initiative focusing on the Arab World's economic and social issues.

Prince Hassan also noted that his discussions with the Russian premier covered efforts to overcome the stalemate in the peace process, ways to bolster Jordanian-Russian relations and Moscow's dialogue with both Iraq and Iran.

Referring to joint Russian-Jordanian ventures, the Crown Prince said that Jordan's geographical location makes it eligible to attract major Russian investments and offers a good opportunity for joint economic ventures.

Prince Hassan, accompanied by HRH Prince Rashid and Princess Badiya, had earlier met representatives of economic sectors in Russia to discuss trade and economic cooperation. During the visit, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani discussed economic issues with Russian officials.

The Crown Prince also met in Moscow with Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin and the

ambassadors of Arab and Islamic countries and explained Jordan's stand with regard to the peace process.

Upon the conclusion of Prince Hassan's talks in Moscow, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh described the visit as constructive and important adding that the visit resulted in consensus on laying the ground for an economic agreement to be concluded soon in addition to joint ventures to be launched in Jordan and abroad.

In Prague, Prince Hassan is to meet with Czech President Vaclav Havel and attend an international conference in which world statesmen, politicians and other prominent personalities are taking part.



Artist Julian Beaver completes his memorial to Princess Diana which he drew in chalk onto a pedestrian street in central London Wednesday. Millions of people are expected to attend the funeral service for Diana on Saturday (see stories on page 12) (Reuters photo)

Britain to protest to Libya after 'crime' allegations

LONDON (AFP) — The Foreign Office is to file a formal protest to Libya over a charge by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi that Princess Diana and her Egyptian friend Dodi Fayed were victims of a "racist crime" allegedly perpetrated by British and French agents.

"We are aware of the absurd and extremely distasteful allegations made by Colonel Qadhafi about the tragic death of the Princess of Wales. A formal

letter of protest is being sent to the Libyan government. This outrageous statement by Col. Qadhafi shows, once again, how far short the Libyan government falls of international norms of behaviour," the Foreign Office statement said.

On Monday, Col. Qadhafi said Britain was "the vilest of countries. It committed a crime by executing an Arab citizen who wanted to marry an English princess. And it pre-

pared the accident with the French intelligence services."

Col. Qadhafi told a meeting of government officials marking the Libyan revolution which put him in power 28 years ago: "The assassination of Princess Diana is the most horrible of crimes and an act of religious and ethnic racism, a violation of human rights and international laws."

On Tuesday the Iraqi daily Babel which is run by the eldest son of President

Saddam Hussein, Uday, claimed that the princess was "liquidated by British intelligence services."

"Diana was liquidated by British intelligence services because she had overstepped the norms and had become involved in politics whereas the family she belonged to is supposed to reign but not govern," the paper said.

"Liquidation took place in France so British services could disclaim responsibility," it added.

More than 62 Algerian rebels killed — papers

PARIS (R) — Algerian security forces have killed 47 Islamist rebels including their leader in an operation still going on southwest of the capital, a national newspaper said Wednesday.

Al Khabar said the operation in Sidi Bel Abbes, 375 kilometres southwest of Algiers, began several days ago and involved troops, gendarmes and volunteer forces known as Patriots. Arms and documents had been seized, it said.

As is normal practice in Algeria, where security reports are subject to draconian laws, there was no mention of any casualties among security forces.

In another operation, which was also continuing, security forces killed 15 "terrorists" near Sabra, in the Moussat mountains close to the frontier with Morocco last Friday.

The newspaper said the final toll in the Sabra operation, in which "heavy mil-

itary equipment" was being used, was still not known. Algerian media and officials use the term "terrorist" to mean armed Muslim fundamentalists who have been battling the authorities for nearly six years.

About 60,000 people have died in the violence which erupted shortly after the authorities cancelled a general election in which radical Islamists had taken a huge lead.

La Tribune newspaper

said that another group of rebels operating in the region of Oued Smar, in the Algerian capital, had been "wiped out" during clashes with security forces Monday.

It gave no figure for the number killed. According to the newspaper the group had terrorised suburbs in the east of the capital, a city of around three million people.



ISRAELI GANGSTERS: A dead Israeli slumped inside his car Wednesday in an attack in this Israeli-Arab village on the outskirts of Jerusalem which Israeli police said bears the hallmarks of a gangland killing. Two men in their 30s, both Jewish residents of Jerusalem, were shot and killed at close range. One man with a criminal background was shot some 10 metres from the car. (Reuters photo)

CARE report laments humanitarian situation in Iraq, calls for solutions

AMMAN (J.T.) — Iraq is losing a whole generation of its people due to the inadequacy of the oil-for-food deal's second stage making the horrific decrease of income more profound as more women and children die daily, amid circumstances of appalling degradation, a report received by the Jordan Times said Tuesday.

CARE International's regional manager for the Middle East, Lockton Morrissey said that the world's misconception of the oil-for-food deal's adequacy in providing for the people of Iraq is dangerous. The circumstances, he says, worsen on a daily basis.

According to Mr. Morrissey: "Iraq is losing an entire generation as schools are

unable to function, children are too weak to learn and water quality and availability is appalling. Electric power is also limited and hospital staff have found themselves unable to provide even the most basic needs to an ever increasing number of people requiring their help."

Therefore, CARE is calling for an urgent reevaluation of the world's policy toward Iraq to ensure humanitarian needs are fully met.

CARE International relief experts are concerned that as the "oil-for-food" deal goes into its second phase, the programme will barely keep the strongest of the population on their feet.

"Children, mothers, the aged and sick, were all well

cared for before 1990, but are now dying whilst the outside world mistakenly believes it has solved Iraq's problems with the much delayed "oil-for-food" shipments," Mr. Morrissey said in describing Iraq's dilemma.

Iraq still remains dangerously short of essential medicines and is not in a position to provide complete rations for its people even though the first "oil-for-food" deal was approved nine months ago to provide basic food and medical needs for the Iraqi population.

The report said that while some items are available for a price in Iraq, the average middle class government worker now earns three to four dollars a month. Hav-

ing sold furniture, jewellery and their most valued possessions, they are now totally dependent on government rations and the over-stretched government medical system, it added.

Making the situation even more complicated is that "the pride of many Iraqi people often prevents them from speaking out as they watch their families become thinner either from polluted water or infectious diseases, until one of them falls ill and then they die," Mr. Morrissey said.

CARE's work in Iraq includes feeding hospital patients, providing special nutrient formula for malnourished infants, repairing water facilities, rehabilitating schools and assisting handicapped children.

Hamas leader ill in Israeli prison

RAMALLAH (AFP) — A Hamas leader jailed by Israel in April is ill with back problems and paralysis in his hand and is in need of medical attention, his family said Wednesday.

Sheikh Hassan Yusef has a "slipped disk in his back due to conditions of his imprisonment and his right hand is paralysed," his son Musab told AFP.

"We have asked for permission to send our own doctor to see him but we have been

refused," Mr. Musab said, adding that Sheikh Yusef was released 20 days ago from a month in prison hospital and was still in need of treatment.

"We feel he is in danger and is not receiving proper attention," he said.

Sheikh Yusef, 43, a spokesman for the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the West Bank town of Ramallah, was arrested by the Israeli army in April in a sweep against Hamas

members after a bombing in Tel Aviv which killed three Israelis.

He was put under administrative detention, meaning he could stay in prison for up to six months, renewable, without any charges pressed against him. Israel has arrested dozens of Hamas members in a recent sweep against the group in army-controlled areas of the West Bank in the wake of a July 30 suicide bombing in Jerusalem which Israel blames on the group.

Israeli sentinels on the lookout for nude tourists

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli soldiers at an army observation post perched on a mountain above the Dead Sea recently found a new pastime — spying on nude tourists, it was reported Wednesday.

The Maariv newspaper said a group of soldiers serving their annual reserve duty rediscovered the strategic interest of the observation tower, which was once used to spot infiltrators from Jordan but abandoned after the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1994.

The soldiers installed a telescope in the tower and spent their leisure hours spying on female tourists sunbathing naked on the roof of a Dead Sea hotel.

"The tourists wandered around the roof fully naked and drove us crazy," one of the soldiers told the newspaper.

Eventually women on the roof noticed the uniformed voyeurs and complained to hotel security, which contacted the military. An army spokesman said the troops acted on their own without the knowledge of their superiors.

For 1st time in 17 years, Iraq to open today border point with Iran to serve pilgrims

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq will open Thursday a border crossing with Iran to receive Iranian visitors to its Shiite Muslim shrines for the first time in 17 years.

"Everything is ready. Iraq is prepared to handle Iranian visitors as from Sept. 4," supervisor of Iraq's Al Muthdhiya border point Sabah Al Hourani told reporters late Tuesday.

There was no official reaction from Tehran whether it would allow pilgrims to travel to Iraq.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Aug. 18 decided to allow the resumption

of Iranian visits, suspended since the start of the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war.

Travel agencies in Baghdad say 30 buses will wait for Iranian pilgrims at Muthdhiya, 120 kilometres northwest of the capital, Thursday.

Iraqi newspapers said Wednesday that Iraq's Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan visited Muthdhiya to ensure everything was ready to receive the Iranians.

Shiite, who form the overwhelming majority of Iran's 60 million people, regard the shrines in Karbala and Najaf in southern

Iraq as the most important after Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

Iranian visits to the shrines were halted at the start of the war in which nearly one million people died. Sept. 4 is the date Iraq says the war started in 1980. Iran says it began on Sept. 22.

"There is great desire from the Iranian peoples to visit our holy shrines," Mr. Hourani said.

Last week Iraq's interior ministry said the country was ready to receive up to 3,000 Iranian visitors a week.

Turk police gag Kurdish 'peace train' group

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish police Wednesday prevented activists calling for an end to the Kurdish conflict in southeast Turkey from holding a news conference in Istanbul.

"We will not allow them to hold a news conference... you are waiting in vain," Istanbul deputy police chief Mehmet Caglar told reporters gathered near a landmark city hotel where the group was set to make a statement.

Several hundred police, backed by an armoured vehicle, were deployed near the Pera Palas Hotel, in the heart of European Istanbul.

Security forces earlier this week stopped the foreign and Turkish activists from holding a demonstration in the main southeastern city of Diyarbakir and ordered a convoy of seven buses to return to Istanbul.

A rights group official said

16 members of the group were detained Tuesday evening after their buses were stopped at a police checkpoint outside Istanbul. The human rights association official said those in custody included rights activists and trade unionists.

An official at Switzerland's Istanbul consulate confirmed reports that two Swiss men, described by newspapers as trade unionists, were among those detained.

The group had previously scrapped a trans-European "peace train," planned by a pro-Kurdish group in Germany, after the Turkish government exerted pressure on Western governments.

Ankara had said it believed the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), fighting for self-rule in the southeast, was behind the trip.

NATO, EU top agenda for Demirel visit to Hungary

BUDAPEST (R) — Turkish President Suleyman Demirel arrived in Budapest Wednesday for talks expected to focus on Hungary's accession to NATO and the European Union (EU).

The twin themes will feature high on the agenda at Demirel's meetings with Hungarian President Arpad Goncz and Prime Minister Gyula Horn, Mr. Goncz's spokesman told reporters. Turkey is already a member of NATO and will have to ratify any enlargement to accommodate Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, the three countries invited in July to join the alliance.

However, unlike Hungary, Turkey was not one of the first group of countries with which the European Commission recommended talks be opened on full EU membership. Turkey has hinted in the past that it might delay ratification of NATO enlargement if its own 10-year application to join the EU was not treated more favourably. However, on a visit to Poland in May, Mr. Demirel gave an assurance that his country would not block Polish membership of NATO. Mr. Demirel is accompanied on his two-day official visit by a 130-strong business delegation. Hungary and Turkey signed a free trade agreement in January this year.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:10Ovide and the Gang
14:30The New Fred and Barney
15:00America's Funniest People
15:30He Shoots He Scores
16:30Shingalana
17:00French Programmes
19:00News in French
19:15French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35Trivial Pursuit
20:00Parenthood
20:30Lois and Clark — Superman
21:10Kung Fu
22:00News in English
22:30Feature Film
23:15Step By Step
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:47Fajr
06:07(Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:35Dhuhr
16:10Asr
19:02Maghreb
20:22Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 652826. Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331. Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261. St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751. Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245 Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328. German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404 The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932. Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691. The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295 English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.	Deserts.....16/32 Jordan Valley.....24/38 Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 28, Aqaba 35 Humid- ity readings: Amman 47 per cent, Aqaba 37 per cent.	USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY AMMAN: Dr. Yahya Abdul Rahim 736072 Dr. Bahjat Bader832642 Dr. Nasser Ibrahim830432 Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi893542 Firas pharmacy661912 Ferdous pharmacy778336 Al Asema pharmacy637055 Naiyroukh pharmacy623672 Al Salam pharmacy636730 Yacoub pharmacy644945 Shameesani pharmacy637660 Najib pharmacy847632 IRBID: Dr. Ghazi Ta'umneh250080 Al Quds pharmacy(-) ZARQA: Dr. Tareq Hijawi985445 Khalifeh pharmacy985417	630341 Civil Defence Emergency199 Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777 Fire Brigade617101 Blood Bank775121 Highway Police843402 Traffic Police896390 Public Security Department 630321 Hotel Complaints605800 Price Complaints661176 Water and Sewerage Com- plaints897467 Amman Municipality Com- plaints787111 Telephone Information (directo- ry assistance)121 Overseas Calls010230 Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101 Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101 Jordan Television773111 Radio Jordan774111 Water Authority680100 Jordan Electricity Authority 815615 Electric Power Company 636381 RJ Flight Information 08- 53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08- 53200	Akileh Maternity,642441/2 Jabal Amman Maternity 642362 Malhas, J. Amman636140 Palestine, Shameesani 607071 Shameesani Hospital669131 University Hospital845845 Al-Muasher Hospital 667277/9 The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37 Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6 Italian, Al-Muasher 777101/3 Al-Bashir,775111/26 Army, Marka891611/15 Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50 Amal Hospital674155 The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199 ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323 Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560 Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732 Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990 IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555 Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275 Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100 AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111 FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL	14:40Sharjah (AH) 16:00Rome (AZ) 19:50Tel Aviv (LY) 21:00Cairo (MS) 21:10Beirut (ME) 01:20Amsterdam, Beirut (KL) 05:40London (BA) 09:00Dubai (EK) Royal Wings (RW) (For Thursday and Friday) 08:45Aqaba (RW) 10:05Amman (QAIA) (RW) 10:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW) 18:20Tel Aviv (RW) 19:30Amman (QAIA) (RW) 22:20Aqaba (RW) 23:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW) ARRIVALS Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 09:15Sanaa (RJ) 09:45New Delhi (RJ) 10:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ) 10:05Bombay (RJ) 10:20Bahrain (RJ) 10:25Beirut (RJ) 10:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ) 11:00Colombo (RJ) 15:25Kuwait (RJ) 15:55New York, Amsterdam (RJ) 17:05Moscow (RJ) 17:30London (RJ) 19:10Athens (RJ) 19:20Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ) 20:00Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ) 23:25Dhahran (add) (RJ) 01:05Doha (RJ) 02:59Bahrain (add) (RJ) 04:50Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ) Other Flights 11:00Al 'Arish (add) (PF) 13:00Riyadh (SV) 13:55Doha (GF) 14:30Al 'Arish (PF)	21:10Cairo (RJ) 21:20Laraca (RJ) 21:40Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ) 22:00Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ) 01:45Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ) 02:45Dubai (RJ) 05:45Jeddah (add) (RJ) 06:15Jeddah (RJ) Other Flights 04:00Athens (OA) 06:15Istanbul (TK) 08:45Beirut (ME) 08:50Amsterdam (GA) 09:10London (BA) 13:00Al 'Arish (add) (PF) 14:30Riyadh (SV) 14:45Bahrain, Abu Dhabi (GF) 15:30Annaba (Algeria) (AF) 15:30Al 'Arish (add) (PF) 17:00Rome (AZ) 21:10Tel Aviv (LY) 22:00Cairo (MS) 03:30Amsterdam (KL) 08:45Beirut (ME) 10:00Dubai (EK) 10:25London (BA) Royal Wings (For Thursday and Friday) 07:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW) 09:15Aqaba (RW) 10:30Amman (QAIA) (RW) 17:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW) 18:55Tel Aviv (LY) 21:30Amman (QAIA) (RW) 22:50Aqaba (RW)
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Contract awarded
housing estate

Contract awarded
housing estate

Celebrated novel

Report as reason

Report as reason

WHAT'S GOING

WHAT'S GOING



HUDC Director General Yousef Hiyasat Wednesday signs a contract authorising a local firm to begin construction of the second phase of the Tareq Housing Estate north-west of Amman (Petra photo)

Contract awarded for housing estate infrastructure

AMMAN (Petra) — The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) Wednesday awarded a JD757,161 contract to a local firm to provide infrastructure for the second phase of Tareq Housing Estate northwest of Amman, to be completed within 450 days.

HUDC Director General Yousef Hiyasat, who signed the contract with the firm's general manager, said the company will subdivide 152,318 dunums into 285 plots that will be used for residential units and infrastructure services such as water, telephone, sewage, and electrical networks, as well as a drainage canal, a parking lot, retaining walls, and public squares.

The previous phase of the housing estate, carried out by the corporation, entailed

the construction of 66 housing units, at a total cost of JD1,212 million.

Also Wednesday, the General Corporation for Environmental Protection (GCEP) signed a contract with the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), under which the latter will monitor the emission of pollutant gases and dust in the atmosphere in and around the Hashemite district within Zarqa governorate.

Under the terms of the agreement, RSS researchers will monitor the situation at three stations, one near the Khibat Al Samta waste water treatment plant, a second near the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, and a third near Al Hussein Thermal Power Station, in order to measure the level of pollutants in the air on a daily

basis.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan and RSS President Said Alloush.

The GCEP Wednesday also signed two agreements with the University of Jordan, the first to study the effects of continual irrigation on the levels of salinity in the soil of the Waleh district south of Amman, and the second dealing with management of lands and rainwater harvesting in the upper Yarmouk River Basin.

The agreements were signed by University of Jordan President Fawzi Gharaibeh and the GCEP Director General Fares Juniedi.

Celebrated novelist cites lack of support as reason for resignation

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ziad Qassim, the famous Jordanian novelist recognised for his distinguished writings of Amman's history, announced his resignation from the Jordan Writers Association (JWA) in August due to his dissatisfaction with the guild.

"The lack of support in literary works and the restriction of personal awards to some members are a few of the reasons that led to my resignation," Mr. Qassim said.

"I do not believe that my works were attended to in the right way," he added.

Although a member of the JWA for over six years, the association never offered to publish his works, while many other institutions have shown their respect for his writings and several published manuscripts, he said.

Lack of interest in his works and not having critical workshops dealing with them were the main reasons behind his resignation, secretary of JWA Basil Rifaa said.

The JWA has 408 members working in several departments, including literature, novels, poetry, drama, theatre, and children's literature, Mr. Rifaa said.

The association, there-

fore, cannot focus its attention on one writer, but rather mention him and his works within a workshop of a certain genre, he explained.

In a workshop dedicated to Jordanian novelists of the 90's, Mr. Qassim was present and was awarded the highest award, the "Taysir Shoul Prize for Novels," he said.

Non-affiliated institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Union of Arab Writers, nominate recipients, in addition to the JWA, Mr. Qassim clarified.

"I believe my works are appreciated by many other institutions far more than the JWA," he said.

Personal awards do not support literary works, he added.

"The support is beneficial when a writer's works are published," Mr. Qassim insisted.

"I felt that my works were not properly appreciated at the association. For example, I have been working in Amman's municipality for some time, and the municipality published one of my books, which should be the JWA's obligation," he said.

When a member offers his or her resignation, the JWA allows a two-month period of reconsideration, both for the association and the resigning person, Mr. Rifaa explained.

Last Sunday in a private

meeting, JWA president Mr. Fakhri Kassar was assigned to convince Mr. Qassim to retract his resignation, since the association "values its members," Mr. Rifaa said.

The guild lacks focus, which is the result of past oversights, Mr. Qassim said.

"I believe that Mr. Kassar and the administration of JWA are doing their best to improve and develop the association, but such a task needs great time and effort," he concluded.

The JWA, established in 1974, was closed by the government in 1987 on the grounds that the association had political movements in the Kingdom and did not have a proper cultural role.

The association was re-opened in 1989 with the return of democratic and parliamentary life in Jordan.

The JWA awards 10 prizes annually and publishes a seasonal magazine called "Al Awraq" (The Papers), Mr. Rifaa said.

The JWA has a new agenda of reviving the association's role in literary works, and activists are promoting its role among other similar unions following years of weakness, Mr. Kassar said.

Opposition denounces UNRWA's cuts as 'plot to eliminate Palestinian problem'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The 11 Jordanian opposition political parties Wednesday issued a statement attacking a decision by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to reduce its services to Palestinian refugees, accusing the agency of being part of a plot to settle the refugees and eliminate the Palestinian problem.

"UNRWA's Commissioner General has declared a series of austerity measures under the pretext of dealing with the deficit in the agency's budget, estimated at \$20 million for this year, but the move is part of the ongoing drive to terminate UNRWA's services gradually within the so-called 'peace programme'," the statement said.

"The agency's moves are aimed at settling the Palestinians in Arab countries, as provided for in the peace

agreements with the Zionist enemy, in the course of liquidating the Palestinian problem and cancelling the Palestinian people's right to return to their homeland as stipulated in U.N. Resolutions 194 and 237," the statement continued.

"We, as opposition political parties in Jordan, declare our outright rejection of the agency's plot and demand that UNRWA continue to meet its U.N. legal, and political commitments toward the refugees," it added.

The statement demanded that all concerned parties and nations that respect international rules and human rights principles intervene and link UNRWA with the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees, which incorporates the U.N. definition of "refugee" calling for the repatriation of displaced

peoples, rather than their rehabilitation or provision of employment.

The statement urged all Jordanian opposition parties and national movements to stand firm in defence of the refugees' right to return and to reject the idea of settling refugees in Arab countries.

The statement also implored the Jordanian people to act in concert in rejecting these plots through various means.

Also on Wednesday, the higher coordination committee for the opposition parties issued a statement describing the U.S. secretary of state's visit to the Middle East as another manifestation of Washington's support for Israel.

"The opposition political parties believe the U.S. secretary can by no means play a peaceful role, because the U.S. government is com-

mitted to remain hostile to Arabs and biased toward the Zionist enemy. This is clear from the American aid to the Jewish state, militarily and financially, and manifested in the U.S. stand within and outside U.N. circles, including Washington's resistance to any U.N. stands against the Zionist settlement plans and the U.S. Congress' decision to move their embassy to Jerusalem," according to the statement, which was signed by Mohammad Zoubi, head of the coordination committee.

"Because U.S. aggression is still directed against Iraq, Libya, and Sudan, the opposition parties consider the U.S. secretary's visit as a continuation of the American support for the Zionist enemy, and believe that distracting public opinion with such visit is only part of the policy of deception, some-

thing that has been ongoing since the Madrid conference," the statement charged.

The statement urged all parties and the masses in Jordan and other Arab countries "to take a very firm stand against the American role in Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, and other parts of the Arab World because the U.S. government is an enemy, not a friend of the Arabs, and therefore involving it in any effort means accepting its hostile role directed against Arab rights and interests."

The statement said the opposition groups hold the government and the other Arab governments responsible for the continuation of what has been called "the peace process."

Joint Jordanian-Yemeni committee to discuss cooperation in several fields

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki will arrive in Sanaa Friday to head Jordan's team in the joint Jordanian-Yemeni committee that will prepare the ground for the Jordanian-Yemeni Higher Committee meeting opening there on Sept. 7.

The preparatory committee's two-day meeting will review the implementation of agreements concluded by the higher joint committee in July 1996 concerning cooperation in maritime transport, trade, and seaports.

The preparatory committee is also to discuss collaborative investment projects, industrial coordination between the two private sectors, and affairs of the chambers of trade and industry.

Several other areas of potential cooperation are on the agenda, including

agriculture, fisheries, electricity and energy, construction, housing, and telecommunications.

The committee will examine the prospects of Yemen giving priority to Jordanian contractors in Yemeni projects, launching a joint land transport company, and linking Aden and Sanaa with Amman through a weekly flight by Royal Jordanian (RJ).

The preparatory committee is also discussing a mechanism for providing medical treatment to Yemenis in Jordanian hospitals, the provision of Jordanian teachers to Yemeni schools and universities, and acceptance of Yemeni students at local institutions of higher education.

Further issues on the agenda include cooperation in media and information, exchanges between the national

news agencies, and the extradition of criminals between the two security services.

The preparatory committee meeting was preceded on Sept. 3 by the joint technical committee, comprising representatives of the public and private sectors and the chambers of trade and industry.

The higher committee is expected to conclude an agreement on organising employment and sharing expertise in vocational training, and to discuss other issues concerning tourism and culture.

The present trade balance between Yemen and Jordan is in favour of Jordan, which last year exported JD21 million worth of goods, mainly cement, and imported JD5.7 million worth of Yemeni products, mainly fish.

Prime minister asks for increased social focus at schools

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Wednesday urged the Ministry of Education to make arrangements for schools to remain open in the evenings to allow students to study and conduct extracurricular activities.

Dr. Majali said the ministry should allow for meetings between teachers and students outside of the classroom so that teachers can learn about students' problems and hold discussions, and suggested that the ministry find an appropriate mechanism for implementing this process.

Stressing that schools serve as an appropriate arena for building the character of students and encouraging creative work, the prime minister said schools should be made to function as social centres, enabling teachers and students to discuss problems facing the local communities and

interact with the local residents.

Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri briefed the prime minister on extracurricular activities offered at schools, noting that nearly one quarter of a million students currently participate in these activities at evening centres.

Ministry Secretary General Izzat Jaradat outlined the ministry's plans for this school year and the programmes for developing the educational system through the year 2007.

Dr. Majali spoke at a meeting of the ministry's planning committee, which later reviewed the general situation at the beginning of the school year and heard a report on the distribution of books, the appointment of teachers, and the supervisors' visits to schools around the country.

Landmine survivor assists other victims, seeks ban at Oslo

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — While walking on a newly-planted field in northern Jordan, 14-year-old Kamel Saadi unknowingly stepped on a landmine that had drifted to its edge, becoming another landmine victim.

He decided to become a prosthetist while studying in the United States, in order to help other landmine victims in the Middle East.

In 1996 Kamel joined the Landmine Survivors Network (LSN), "the first international organisation created by landmine survivors for landmine survivors," Mr. Saadi, now 33, told the Jordan Times.

The network, founded by American landmine survivors Ken Rutherford and Gerard White, targets landmine victims worldwide in urgent need of proper medical care and rehabilitation, said Mr. Saadi, who has become LSN's representative for the Middle East.

Approximately 70 people, in most cases children and women, are killed or maimed by landmines each day, he stated.

The Network's latest

achievement is the development of a database to link landmine survivors with the resources available to them, he added.

"The database will be for landmine survivors in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq," explained Mr. Saadi, who has been in contact with survivors in the entire Middle East.

Many of the victims have psychological problems and technical problems with their prosthetics, which makes them feel helpless and that their lives have come to an end, he continued.

Mr. Saadi departed for the Oslo Diplomatic Conference Wednesday with a clear mission: He, along with 15 other landmine victims, will speak to over 100 state delegates and show them living proof of what landmines do.

"They hear about what landmines do, but we want them to look at us and see reality in the face," he exclaimed.

He is optimistic about the outcome of this conference, since government representatives in Brussels last June showed genuine interest in banning anti-personnel mines,



Kamel Saadi leaves a local hospital after his third amputation. Mr. Saadi, 33, had to have his left leg removed after stepping on a landmine in the northern part of the country

he said.

According to a statement made by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a coalition of more than 1,000 non-governmental organisations in over 60 coun-

tries, the U.S. proposed on the first day of the conference (Sept. 1) a permanent exception for the use of anti-personnel mines in Korea.

"Last minute participation by the U.S. and their introduction

today of a geographic exception is perhaps the biggest threat to the whole process," said Jody Williams of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and ICBL coordinator.

WHAT'S GOING ON

DARAT AL FUNUN SUMMER '97 FESTIVAL

* Film entitled "Donatello 1386-1466: The First modern Sculpture" at 6:00 p.m.

* Graphics by Rafa Nasiri of Iraq, Ziad Dalloul of Syria, and Najia Mehadiji at the South Hall.

* Paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammad Qailoka at the Middle Hall.

* Sculpture, drawings, and paintings by Jordanian artist Rajwa Ali.

* Paintings by children of Zarqa reflecting on the problem of pollution at the Byzantine church.

PLAY

* Children's play — "How to Recover Our Names" at the Royal Cultural Centre, at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings by Palestinian artists entitled "Palestine the Reality and the Dream" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until Oct. 2 (except Tuesdays).

* Display of caricature drawings by Naji Al Ali at Abdul Hameed Showman Foundation, Jabal Amman, until Sept. 6.

Statistics indicate drugs are 'serious problem' — study

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Recent statistics on drug addiction in Jordan indicate that drugs have become a serious issue for security agencies, the head of the Anti-Narcotics Department Colonel Nazeeh Shraydeh said.

A study by Col. Shraydeh indicated that 158 drug cases were reported in the first seven months of this year, compared to 292 cases in 1996, and 359 in 1995.

The study, submitted during the two-day seminar held

last week under the title "Towards a secure Jordanian family in 2000," showed that 67 people arrested this year on drug charges were between the ages 20-29.

The study added that 59 of the arrested were aged 30-39 years, 19 were above 50, and the remaining cases were below 20 years old.

"To say that Jordan is merely a transit area for drugs and not a base, to say that drugs are an imported phenomenon and do not exist in Jordan, these are no longer valid statements," Col. Shraydeh said in his study.

"Due to the increase in drug addiction in Jordan, we are in a new reality where addiction is no longer concentrated in a particular sector of society, but now includes all social strata, rich and poor," the security official said.

The colonel emphasised in his study, which was made available to the Jordan Times, that among the reasons behind drug addiction were family disputes, keeping bad company, escape from the present reality of the young generation, poverty, and adopting wrong ideas on drug use.

Drug use among women remained "very low" and is not considered as a "phenomenon" in the Kingdom, the official said.

Statistics indicate that in the first half of this year, only 13 drug cases were reported among females, compared to 337 cases among males, he said.

In 1996, 15 cases were reported among women, compared to 641 cases among men, the colonel added in his study.

Colonel Shraydeh said the use of heroin, a "serious and dangerous" phenomenon, is

spreading among drug addicts.

Private sector physicians' figures showed that "there is an increase in heroin addicts who are approaching these doctors for treatment," the colonel added.

The study showed that among the cases reported this year, 93 cases involved heroin, compared to 55 hashish cases, and 10 cases of pills.

During 1996, 103 heroin cases, 168 hashish cases, and 31 pill cases were reported, the study added.

The study revealed that 306 Jordanians, 12 Egyptians,

nine Saudis, nine Syrians, five Iraqis, eight Turks, two Ghanais, and one Kuwaiti and Lebanese each were involved in drug cases.

The number of Jordanians involved in drug cases in 1996

was 556, compared to 637 in 1995, the study said.

Colonel Shraydeh dismissed weekly tabloid reports that addiction is spreading among students in schools and universities, stressing that educational institutions are still "clean," and if cases are discovered, "they are individual cases."

No end yet to Serb power struggle Army chief harangues Plavsic

Blast rocks Catholic residence in Sarajevo

BANJA LUKA (AFP) — Neither side in the Bosnian Serb power struggle is showing any sign of a let up, with hardliners demanding Wednesday that President Biljana Plavsic toe their line, and Ms. Plavsic refusing to buckle.

The commander of the Bosnian Serb army, General Pero Colic, speaking early Wednesday after meeting Western-backed Ms. Plavsic here, called on her to obey the parliament which is loyal to hardline wartime leader Radovan Karadzic.

He also called for Ms. Plavsic to accept new presidential elections in the Serb-run part of Bosnia to settle the power struggle that erupted when Ms. Plavsic in July announced the sacking of a hardline interior minister.

Ms. Plavsic, who backs implementation of the 1995 Bosnian peace treaty, declined to comment after the meeting.

She has always previously refused to accept early presidential elections and demanded legislative elections to replace the hardline parliament which she insists is now operating illegally after she formally dissolved it in July.

Showing no sign of giving in to pressure, Ms. Plavsic Tuesday refused an invitation by top civilian hardliner, Momcilo Krajisnik, a close friend and ally of Mr. Karadzic, to meet in the hardline-run town of Bijeljina Wednesday.

SARAJEVO (AFP) — A blast rocked a Sarajevo house that is home to eight Roman Catholic priests and trainee priests early Wednesday, local and U.N. police said.

"An explosion took place at around 3:00 a.m. in front of the Parish House in the Sarajevo neighbourhood of Grbavica", Adnan Kosovac, spokesman of the Sarajevo police, told AFP.

An explosive device, the type of which was not known yet, was set in front of the door of the Parish's chapel, Mr. Kosovac said.

Alex Ivankovic, spokesman for the U.N. police said that according to early reports there were "no casualties but three cars and a building were damaged in the explosion". Police were investigating.

A series of explosions targeted Catholic churches and monasteries in Bosnia earlier this year ahead of the visit of the Pope John Paul II to Sarajevo. That visit itself was marred by an apparent attempt on the life of the Pope — with bombs wired up to explode on the route he was due to take into the town.

The bombs were found and removed by Bosnian police. The perpetrators of the incidents were never found.

First time Tuesday accusing her of "irresponsible" behaviour in opposing the hardliners she says are getting rich while her people go hungry.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright last Monday urged Mr. Milosevic, who retains a powerful influence in Bosnia, to "get off the fence" and throw his weight behind Ms. Plavsic.

But Tuesday Zoran Lilic, number two in the ruling Socialist Party who is a former Yugoslav president and close ally of current Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, told state televi-

sion here that Ms. Plavsic "is, at least, not serious and even irresponsible."

He also attacked as "irresponsible, unacceptable and... a one-sided interference" NATO backing for Ms. Plavsic.

The top international envoy to Bosnia, High Representative Carlos Westendorp, is due to meet Mr. Milosevic Wednesday in Belgrade. The crisis in Bosnia will dominate the talks.

The West, Washington in particular, has backed Ms. Plavsic, who has been thrown out of the ruling Serb party and formed a party of her own.

Washington hopes that the former hardliner — still an ardent nationalist but seen as more reasonable than Mr. Karadzic — will force the reluctant Serbs to implement the Dayton peace treaty, securing peace in Bosnia and easing the exit of NATO troops from the country.

NATO too has been cracking down on the hardliners and the Pentagon said Tuesday NATO forces had inspected Bosnian Serb Special Police — part of the force paid by Mr. Karadzic to protect him and other hardliners — in the hardline stronghold Pale to check for banned weapons.

The Pentagon denied reports NATO troops had inspected Mr. Karadzic's offices.

Afghan opposition attack north of Kabul

HOSSEIN KOT (AFP) — Afghan opposition forces launched a heavy attack on Taliban positions north of the capital early Wednesday, militia fighters here said.

But the Taliban launched a counterattack, forcing the former government troops to flee, said a Taliban militia commander, speaking at this dusty frontline village only 20 kilometres north of Kabul.

He said the attack was the first opposition initiative for days.

"They launched a heavy attack early this morning with lots of guns but we fought back and they retreated," Mawlawi Ahmad Habibullah told AFP.

He said the enemy forces loyal to ousted government leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, attempted to capture two key hilltops here using infantry forces backed by heavy weapons fire.

"The attack was brief, and they ran away leaving dead bodies on the road," he said.

No corpses were visible by mid-morning, and no independent confirmation of the claims was immediately available.

Local residents, of whom only a few remain in the fertile farming district, confirmed battles raged early in the day with jet, rocket, mortar and artillery action.

When asked for details of the morning's fighting, a Kuchi nomad passing through the area only offered a more philosophical reply.

"They're only fighting for power again, but they're causing a lot of damage," Abdul Majid commented.

"People who have power should really be more intelligent."

Occasional battles have been raging here for seven weeks, after a lightning two-day Massoud advance pushed the Taliban back to hilltop positions here.

But since the advance in late July, neither side has been able to make a decisive blow at the front, which zig-zags through the fertile Shamali Valley that extends north from Kabul to the towering Hindu Kush mountains.

Mr. Massoud, pushed out of Kabul by the Taliban Muslim force more than 11 months ago, shares control of around one-third of Afghanistan with a Shiite Uzbek warlord, Abdul Malik.

The Taliban militia control the southern two-thirds of the war-shattered country, and have imposed a strict form of Islamic law in those areas and in the once relatively liberal capital.

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Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams speaks at a press conference after arriving at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Mr. Adams and members of his negotiating team, including Caoimhghin O'Caolain (right), are on a four city, six-day visit to the United States before the Sept. 15 start of peace talks with England (Reuters photo)

Sinn Féin leader arrives in U.S.

WASHINGTON (R) — The leader of Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), on a five-day visit to the United States, said Tuesday all-party talks in Belfast offered the best hope of peace this century.

Gerry Adams arrived in Washington late Tuesday after technical problems delayed his flight from New York, and spoke briefly to a cheering Irish-American crowd on Capitol Hill.

Mr. Adams is due to meet in Washington and New York with high-ranking members of the Clinton administration and other prominent politicians, including New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

It is his first trip to the United States since IRA guerrillas in July announced a fresh cease-fire in their 28-year campaign to end British rule of Northern Ireland.

The visit takes place days before the start of all-party talks on the future of the province, to which Sinn Féin has been invited by Britain's new Labour government following the truce.

"Dialogue is the only way forward. It's only through dialogue and negotiation we will build a better situation," Mr. Adams told reporters at Kennedy International Airport, where he stopped on his way to Washington.

"We are in a peace negotiation mode. We don't intend for this opportunity to be wasted," he said. "This opportunity for peace clearly is the best one we're going to have this century."

"We have to ensure it isn't frittered away," he added.

Mr. Adams said the trip was designed both to raise funds and to mobilise public opinion to support Sinn Féin's goals.

"We want to make it very, very clear that a united Ireland is not only possible but it is going to a reality," he said.

"We will give it our very, very best effort to bring about a lasting peace," he said.

Accompanying Mr. Adams are Sinn Féin's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, and Caoimhghin O'Caolain, the first Sinn Féin member to enter the Republic of Ireland parliament.

The high point of the fund-raising effort will be a dinner in New York city's Waldorf Astoria Hotel, to be attended by 500 guests.

There also will be a political rally in New York and engagements in Chicago and San Francisco.

In Washington, State Department spokesman James Foley said the United States welcomed the cease-fire.

"We want it to hold. We want it to be truly, 100 per

cent respected on a permanent basis," he said. "And secondly, we will encourage the efforts of the negotiators and of the participants in the negotiations to make a good faith effort, an effort for the long haul through the bumps that will occur if this process gets under way as we hope."

Both Mr. Adams and the State Department spokesman said they would welcome the full participation of pro-British Unionists at the talks.

"They have a stake in a successful peaceful outcome, and in order for their own perspectives to be brought to bear, they have to be at the table," Mr. Foley said.

The province's largest Protestant Party, the Ulster Unionists, said they would remain involved with the talks in some form and not follow a boycott by two smaller Protestant groupings over Sinn Féin's inclusion.

But party leader David Trimble said he would not necessarily sit round a table with Sinn Féin negotiators. Unionists may take part in proximity talks, where they would sit in a separate room and use intermediaries.

"We think the chairs and table should be left vacant for them and the doors should be open," Mr. Adams said.

Australian republic debate heats up

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia's Labour opposition accused Prime Minister John Howard Tuesday of filling a constitutional convention set up to consider severing links to the British crown with monarchist allies and "young fogies."

The charge followed the release Sunday of non-parliamentary appointments to the convention due early next year to consider whether Australia should become a republic and to frame questions for a national referendum.

Republicans on Mr. Howard's own Liberal Party have claimed the appointments list is stacked with monarchists including young people unrepresentative of Australian youth usually shown by polls to be overwhelmingly republican.

Opposition leader Kim Beazley said Tuesday it appeared at least three of the eight youth delegates were avowed monarchists, including one who had been disciplined over voting

irregularities in the Liberal Party.

"If it is the case... what's being sent there is an over-represented delegation of young fogies," he said.

Mr. Beazley introduced a parliamentary private member's bill requiring a plebiscite or non-binding vote on the republic issue.

"It sets up a process far cheaper than the convention process, using a parliamentary committee to design a question after public consultation, and then direct it to the public," he said.

Australians, he argued, were ready now for a national vote on the issue and would rather not waste time with Mr. Howard's constitutional convention.

Mr. Howard this week named 36 people to attend the convention, along with 40 state and federal politicians and 76 to be elected by a postal ballot.

Opposition legal spokesman, Nick Bolkus said the government should rethink its appointments or

risk making a laughing stock of the whole process.

"It's quite apparent that the Liberal Party and the prime minister has used this process as a factional game to once again beat the wets in his party around the head," he said.

Mr. Bolkus said the choices failed to reflect the overwhelming support among young Australians, including the Young Liberals Movement, for a republic.

He said the government had opted for monarchists such as retired Governor-General Bill Hayden, a former Labour leader and a Republican who admitted recently to have become a monarchist, as the only former politician.

Mr. Howard's parliamentary secretary responsible for the convention, Nick Minchin, rejected the criticism. He said a recent poll showed 52 per cent of 18-34 year olds backed a republic.

26 per cent were opposed and 22 per cent were undecided.

Australia to build \$210m nuclear reactor

CANBERRA (R) — Australia said Wednesday it would build a new 290 million Australian dollars (\$210 million) nuclear reactor, mainly for medical research, rejecting opposition from Green groups and local residents.

Science Minister Peter McGauran said the new reactor on the site of an existing plant in Sydney, would help save thousands of people suffering from diseases such as cancer.

"The government's very proud of its decision, be-

cause it will save Australian lives: 260,000 Australians undergo a nuclear medicine procedure every



A man watches as a Vietnam Airliner burns after crashing near Phnom Penh's Pochentong Airport Wednesday. More than 60 people were killed when the Vietnam Airlines plane crashed, aviation and hospital officials said (Reuters photo)

More than 60 feared dead in Phnom Penh plane crash

SEOUL (AFP) — At least 21 South Koreans were among the more than 60 people killed in the Vietnam Airlines crash at Phnom Penh's Pochentong Airport Wednesday, television reports said here.

The Foreign Ministry, which earlier said nine South Koreans, six of them members of a university medical team, were believed to be among the dead, later revised its figure upwards to 21.

Yonhap Television News (YTN) said the dead South Koreans were among 44 who boarded Vietnam Airlines (VNA) flight 939 in Seoul at 8:55 a.m. Wednesday bound for Ho Chi Minh City.

At least 18, and possibly as many as 23 people, changed to the ill-fated VNA Flight 815 bound for Phnom Penh, while the others remained in Vietnam, YTN said.

But the ministry spokesman told AFP its information indicated that the 18 were joined by three more South Koreans who boarded the plane in Ho Chi Minh City.

The Wonkwang University medical team, from the southern city of Iksan, was carrying medical equipment for a college in Phnom Penh, Yonhap News Agency said.

The two colleges established sisterhood relations

last December. Two of them were identified as doctors from Iksan. Another was identified as connected to Phnom Penh's Royal Palace Hotel.

Residents in Seoul, still traumatised by last month's Korean Air crash in Guam which killed 223 people, sat horrified as television commentators repeatedly read out lists of those believed dead.

South Korea has a mission in Phnom Penh, but has yet to establish full diplomatic relations with Cambodia, whose King Sihanouk has close ties to rival communist North Korea.

Reports from Phnom Penh said the Russian-built

Tupolev-134 crashed into rice fields and disintegrated as it was making a second attempt to land, scattering bodies on the ground.

Only the tail was still recognisable, an AFP correspondent saw. Television showed a lone soldier, accompanied by an unidentified Westerner, walking among the prone bodies in the downpour checking in vain for signs of life.

The plane, which usually seats about 100, was carrying 60 passengers and six crew. A Vietnam Airlines official said three people survived, while a Cambodian transport official, Meas Smith said only two children had escaped.

Seoul seeks longer jail term for Hanbo founder

SEOUL (R) — South Korean state prosecutors Wednesday asked the Seoul high court to extend to 20 years a 15-year jail term imposed on the founder of the scandal-ridden Hanbo Group by a lower court.

They also demanded stiffer prison sentences for nine other defendants standing trial in a loans-for-kickbacks scandal, including top aides to President Kim Young-Sam and prominent bankers.

The nine were jailed for between three and seven years.

Hanbo founder, Chung Tae-Soo, was convicted in

June of bribing politicians and bankers to keep money rolling in to the group's failed steel-making flagship, Hanbo Steel Co.

Hanbo Steel collapsed in January under debts of \$5.5 billion, setting off a chain of corporate failures and rattling the banking system.

Mr. Chung, 74, was also found guilty of embezzlement and fraud. He and his son, Chung Bo-Keun, were found guilty of siphoning off a combined 364 billion won from funds belonging to the country's 14th-largest business group.

The junior Chung, Hanbo's chairman, was

jailed for three years but the prosecutors asked the high court to double the penalty.

The other defendants are a former cabinet minister, three lawmakers with the ruling New Korea Party and one with the main opposition party, and three former bankers.

Prosecutors called for prison terms of between five and 10 years for the politicians and bankers.

The scandal shattered President Kim's credibility and unearthed other bribery scandals that led to the arrest of his son, Kim Hyun-Chul, who is standing trial separately.

Opposition parties accuse Hanbo of helping bankrupt the president's 1992 election campaign. Mr. Kim has not responded to the charge.

Prosecutors said the Hanbo scandal had rocked the country's economy and society.

Among politicians convicted of accepting bribes, former Home Affairs Minister Kim Woo-Suk was jailed in June for four years.

Two former presidents of Korea First Bank, the largest creditor to Hanbo Steel, and a one-time president of Chohung Bank were jailed for between four and five years.

U.K. pledges housing, facilities in Montserrat

OLVESTON (R) — Britain Tuesday pledged to build housing and other essential facilities in the northern safe zone of volcano-plagued Montserrat and to help residents who wanted to resettle elsewhere.

In a joint statement issued at the end of a two-day visit to the island by International Development Minister George Foulkes, Britain and Montserrat also said a sustainable development plan would be prepared within six months to meet the long-term needs of Montserratians who decided to stay.

Mr. Foulkes travelled to the island Monday to tour volcano-damaged areas, visit shelters and meet with local government officials, in part to mend fences with residents angered by London's response to the volcano crisis.

Following explosive eruptions that virtually destroyed the abandoned capital, Plymouth, in early August, Britain offered aid to anyone who wanted to resettle on another Caribbean island.

But the aid package, less than \$4,000 for adults and \$1,000 for children, fell far short of Montserrat's request.

Britain became locked in a Transatlantic row with the islanders with International Development Minister Clare Short angrily complaining they would next be demanding "golden elephants" in their requests for help.

Then Tuesday Britain pledged to speed up 6.5 million pounds (\$10.3 million) in aid to help the islanders.

But the aid package, less than \$4,000 for adults and \$1,000 for children, fell far short of Montserrat's request.

Britain also halted disbursement of promised relief aid while waiting to see how many of the 4,000-5,000 residents remaining on the island took the offer.

Only a few dozen people took the offer and left the island, officials said.

The statement said Montserrat welcomed "the categorical assurance given by Her Majesty's government that it is committed to maintaining a viable community in the north of the island as long as it is safe for people to live there."

Montserrat wants to rename its new capital Port Diana

LONDON (R) — Montserrat, the Caribbean island battling to rebuild after volcanic eruptions, wants to rename its new capital Port Diana as a memorial to the princess.

"The worldwide love for Princess Diana will create ongoing interest. More people will come off the ships, more people will come from Antigua. It will create a market," said town planner, Bruce Pierce.

"In her death by her name becoming available for Montserrat's new capital, she can actually do something that is really good," he told BBC radio.

Mr. Pierce said plans for a new town feature a port to cater for cruise liners, a Yacht Marina and an international cricket oval.

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Robert Webb, first secretary to Montserrat's British governor, said construction of housing and improvements to a hospital in the north would go ahead.

"A few things were on hold until the situation was sorted out," he said. "The projects are going ahead."

Projects to upgrade fuel storage, roads, water and power systems would move ahead, the statement said.

Montserrat's Soufriere Hills Volcano roared to life on July 18, 1995, forcing the evacuation of Plymouth and much of the south end of the teardrop-shaped, 39-square-mile island.

In late June, fiery eruptions razed seven villages and killed 19 people, the first casualties of the volcano. In early August, massive flows of superheated rock, ash and gas swept over Plymouth, destroying much of the town and laying waste to the port.

More than half of Montserrat's pre-volcano population of 11,000 have sought safe haven elsewhere and those who remain live in a relatively small "safe zone" in the north end.

U.S. Navy unveils plan for smarter, cheaper Tomahawk

WASHINGTON (R) — The navy said Tuesday it planned to deploy a new generation of long-range "Tomahawk" cruise missiles that could circle for hours before being programmed to hit moving targets.

The upgrade would let ship-board commanders redirect missiles against tactical targets such as armor columns, troop formations and mobile missile launchers using satellite data, images from an onboard digital camera and "real-time" updates from Special Forces or other sources, the navy said.

Navy officers said at a news conference that they planned to deploy the updated version, at a unit cost of less than half the current model, starting in December 2002, assuming Congress goes along with the research and

development funding.

Previous versions of the Tomahawk were used by the United States against fixed targets three times, each in Iraq, since the 1991 Gulf war. The new "tactical Tomahawk" model would be able to "loiter" over a battlefield for at least two hours while awaiting instructions to strike, the navy said.

Hughes Missile Systems Co., a General Motors unit that is prime contractor for the current Tomahawk, had promised to supply the planned upgrade at a fixed price of less than \$575,000 apiece, based on a projected purchase of 1,353 units over six years, the navy said.

New versions of the current Tomahawk cost as much as \$1.4 million each, "certainly too expensive for a tactical

missile," said Capt. Gary Johnson of the navy's Tomahawk programme office.

Capt. Johnson said the navy had driven down the unit cost by simplifying the design and consolidating sub-assembly units, as well as by replacing current turbofan engines with cheaper turbo-jets.

The Tomahawk family of cruise missiles are low-flying missiles designed to perform a variety of ship and land attack missions. Armed with conventional or nuclear warheads, the current version can be launched from surface ships, submarines, aircraft and mobile ground units.

The planned tactical Tomahawk would carry only conventional, non-nuclear warheads, the navy said.

Russian Border Guard shot dead in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE (R) — Gunmen shot dead a Russian Border Guard in one of Tajikistan's remote regions late Tuesday, a military official said Wednesday.

A spokesman for the Russian Border Guards told Reuters in the capital Dushanbe that Fakhridin Immonurov, a 27-year-old ethnic Tajik serving on a contract with the Russian guards, was killed by three shots from unidentified attackers. The incident took place near the Pyandzh border point at the Tajik-Afghan border, some 200 kilometers south of Dushanbe.

"Russian Border Guards view this new attack on Russian servicemen as another terrorist act," the spokesman said.

Central America unites in bid to compete globally

MANAGUA (R) — Freed from half a century of war, Central American leaders Tuesday agreed to build a European-style political union to give the region more clout in the global arena.

Leaders of seven countries on the Central American isthmus and one Caribbean ally signed the Nicaragua Declaration II to create a Central American political union during a ceremony.

The accord was signed by the presidents of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Also signing as less than full partners were the president of Panama, the prime minister of Belize and the vice president of the Dominican Republic, a Caribbean nation which has drawn closer to Central America in the past year.

"The benefits of development to which our people have a right are not accessible for each country separately, rather we can achieve them only as a regional community," Guatemalan President Alvaro Arzu told his counterparts.

Ten years after the Esquipulas Summit in Guatemala, where they agreed to work to end cold war-era civil wars and implement democracies, Central American nations are looking outward together in a bid to boost trade and compete in a rapidly changing world, Mr. Arzu said.

"The advent of Central America, which is the product of the spirit of the Esquipulas Agreements, marks a beginning of an unprecedented era for our region," Mr. Arzu said.

The signing of Guatemala's peace accords on Dec. 29 last year ended 36 years of armed rebellion in that nation and left the entire region at peace for the first time in at least half a century.

The union, to be implemented gradually, will be modelled on the European Union, with each country maintaining its sovereignty. It does not call for a federation or single state.

The new pact adds political, cultural and environmental elements to the old Central American common market of the 1960s, which was strictly an economic agreement.

The common market had been considered a successful innovation at the time but was weakened by an increased intensity of the region's civil wars in the 1970s and 1980s.

In addition the five main Central American signatories have signed, or are in the process of negotiating, free trade agreements with Mexico.

Ariane launches 2 satellites for Europe

KOUROU (R) — Western Europe's 99th Ariane rocket put two satellites into orbit for European operators after a launch from equatorial French Guiana late Tuesday.

The Ariane 44LP rocket, equipped with two liquid and two solid strap-on boosters, lifted off at 7:21 p.m. from the European Space Agency (ESA) launch centre in Kourou, French Guiana, on the northeast coast of South America.

Reporters watching the launch at a control centre 13 kilometres from the launch pad saw the rocket light up the cloudy equatorial night sky.

Twenty minutes later, space officials said the Hot Bird-3 satellite had separated from the Ariane rocket.

The Paris-based Eutelsat Organisation said Hot Bird would provide direct television broadcasting to Europe, consolidating the company's coverage of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

"This satellite is for direct television broadcasting and feeding cable networks. We have 64 million households in Europe that receive television through our satellite network — 4 million more than a year ago," Jean Grenier, Eutelsat director general, told a pre-launch news conference.

Mr. Grenier said the cost of Hot Bird-3 — satellite, launch and insurance — exceeded \$250 million.

Hot Bird-3 weighs 3.2 tons and was built in France by Matra Marconi Space, a joint venture between Britain's GEC-Marconi and Matra of France.

It is designed to transmit digital and analogue television channels that can be received using dishes as small as 18 inches in diameter. Hot Bird-3 is designed to



The 99th Ariane 44LP rocket blasts off from the European Space Agency launch pad in the French Guianan town of Kourou. The rocket placed two satellites into orbit, a European telecommunication satellite Hot Bird 3 and a meteorological satellite Meteosat 7 (Reuters photo)

operate in space for 15 years.

Four minutes later the rocket released the Meteosat-7 satellite for the 17-member Eumetsat Meteorological Organisation. The 690 kilogramme satellite will be used for weather observation and Earth imaging.

Eumetsat Director Tillman Mohr said: "Our first task and objective is to provide observation from space to our European member-state user community."

"But the user community

is much wider. If you look at a Meteosat image, at the centre of the image you will see Africa, because we are part of a larger global organisation which is led by the World Meteorological Organisation."

Mr. Mohr said the cost of Meteosat-7 — satellite and launch — was \$150 million.

The Paris-based Ariane-space company, which launches the Ariane-4 rocket series, has led the commercial satellite launch market since the late 1980s.

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Croatia holds 3 more for war crimes

ZAGREB (R) — Croatian police Tuesday arrested three former policemen who allegedly took part in the killings of nearly 400 people, mostly ethnic Serbs, at the start of the 1991-95 war, the Interior Ministry said.

The arrests of Munib Suljic, Igor Mikula and Nebojsa Hodak, came a day after another policeman, Miro Bajramovic, admitted in a statement to an independent Croatian newspaper to killing 72 Serbs.

Police arrested the three and took them to detention in the Zagreb County Court together with Mr. Bajramovic, the ministry said in a statement carried by the state news agency Hina.

It said the three and Bajramovic, all members of a Croatian paramilitary police unit fighting against the Serbs, were due to appear before an investigative judge in Zagreb.

"The above named were detained following the criminal investigation of allegations made by Miro Bajramovic in the Feral Tribune newspaper on Sept. 1," the statement said.

Bajramovic was arrested in the village of Dodos south of Zagreb Monday only hours after his interview with the weekly. The ministry did not say where

the other three were arrested.

Bajramovic, 40, told the paper the unit was responsible for killing nearly 400 people, mostly Serb civilians but also unsympathetic Croats in several locations, including the town of Gospić and the village of Pakrac Poljana.

He revealed details of grisly crimes, such as torture and summary execution of prisoners, committed by the paramilitary police unit. Among others, he directly named Suljic, 38, Mikula, 26, and Hodak, 31, as taking part in the crimes.

Bajramovic said he had been responsible for the deaths of 36 people and actually killed 72 of them, including nine women.

It was not clear why he came forward with his story. He said only that he was embittered by the fact that other members of the unit got rich, while he ended up with nothing.

It was the first time a member of the Croatian armed forces, who fought against Serbs in a ferocious war in which each side attacked the civilian populations of the other ethnic group, had publicly admitted acts that could be qualified as war crimes.

State television said Monday the Zagreb county

prosecutor had ordered an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the 1991 killing spree described by Bajramovic in the interview.

Bajramovic, along with some other members of the unit, was imprisoned by the Croatian authorities early in 1992 but released some three months later.

No charges were brought against them despite numerous media reports alleging misconduct.

Some 18 ethnic Croats have been charged with war crimes by the Hague tribunal, but all of them for alleged acts committed in neighbouring Bosnia, not Croatia.

"The criminal investigation brought to light new facts on the already known criminal actions of the named individuals, as well as so far unknown crimes," the ministry statement said Tuesday.

Feral's journalists said Tuesday they had been receiving phone threats since the interview was published.

"Most phone calls we received in the last two days were threats, either from some of the people named in the interview or anonymous callers," a journalist said.

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Peace is security for all

IN HIS address to the Moscow State Institute for International Relations on Tuesday, HRH Crown Prince Hassan offered timely and thought provoking analysis of the negative factors that have led to the current deadlock in the peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. He identified them as follows: The focus on immediate and direct security aspects, the closure of the Palestinian territories and attempts to preempt the final status negotiations on Jerusalem, borders and settlements.

The cumulative effect of these three factors reveals how important it is to see the current situation in the context of both the upcoming visit of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the region and activating the role of Russia as co-sponsor of the Madrid-conference umbrella of the peace process. Moscow is capable of making a substantial contribution to the peace effort despite the setbacks that it has sustained during its current transformation from communism to a free-market economy. It could not have escaped the attention of the Middle Eastern parties that the absence of an activist role by Russia may have also contributed to the existing deadlock.

Prince Hassan's pointed reminder that Moscow has a real role to play in the efforts to revive the negotiations is, therefore, noteworthy. As vital and critical as Washington's intervention is to the process, the involvement of Russia is equally beneficial to all concerned.

On the global level, the Crown Prince spoke about factors that erode international peace and security. "It is recognised that stagnating economies present grave dangers to peace," he stressed. "Increased unemployment, poverty and competition for global markets have certainly aggravated the international climate." Crown Prince Hassan went on to say that, "Threats emanating from the abuse of natural resources such as water" are also menacing global stability and progress, warning against the possibility that the next generation of wars in the Middle East could be water-related. This is again a timely reminder of the dangers that still lie ahead unless there is in place an equitable water sharing arrangement in the region, in particular where water is a very scarce resource and some states are jockeying for position to control it for their own benefit, most likely at the expense of others.

The broader concept of security and peace where such issues as environment, demographic growth, mass migration, terrorism and drug-related crimes have a direct or indirect impact on the equation of peace, stability and progress should by now be getting more appreciation and examination by the international community and especially by Israel and the U.S.

With this in mind, a revival of the multilateral talks on the different issues of the peace process might be a timely move. Russia, which enjoys good relations with a key player, Syria, and equally important relations with Israel, should play its full and rightful role as a co-sponsor of the peace talks to breathe new life into both the bilateral and the multilateral negotiations. By virtue of its political weight, Russia can exert pressure on the U.S. to be more evenhanded, and Israel more amenable, in the search for a lasting and comprehensive peace in this part of the world.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Arab Al Yawm discussed the tragic death of Princess Diana, saying that she fell victim of the tyranny of the media and the press. It is the media which projected the late princess to fame and it is the media that brought about her tragic death through pursuing her movements everywhere, said Riad Hroub. Many people might have not noticed or felt the fact that the omnipotent tyranny and power of the media can bring about destruction to many people in this age, he said. In the case of Princess Diana, the media had been following her around, since she got married through the divorce and after, never giving her a chance to live a normal life, able to love whoever she wants and live anywhere she chooses, noted the writer. He said the media, which brought down President Bush, hero of the Gulf war, had previously caused the fall of his predecessor, Richard Nixon, and its power had revealed corruption among world politicians, placed many behind bars and caused others to commit suicide. Indeed, he said, the power of the media is more formidable than that of nuclear bombs and ballistic missiles and that is why many world leaders fear the power of this "fourth estate" which every day reasserts itself as a dominant force, outwitting all other estates.

View from Academia

Going south — a physical and inner trip of discovery

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

LAST WEEK, some friends, my family and I went on a trip which took us to a number of interesting places in the southern part of the Kingdom: the southern Jordan Valley, the Tafleeh hills, Dana, Wadi Rum and Petra.

The trip was a nice break from the daily, weekly and monthly routine: it is quite scary and even killing when you are often able to tell with a great deal of precision, before the week begins, what you will be doing at each hour and minute of the seven forthcoming days. The surprises that happen, as well as the interruptions to a monotonous schedule, are most often unpleasant: funerals, weddings or visits by relatives at the craziest imaginable times.

The trip was also an opportunity to break away from the bustle, hustle and fast pace of life in the capital. Amman in the summer has its own charm, no doubt, (especially for those coming to visit from abroad), but for many of us who live in it it can be overpowering.

The tour guide who took us in his jeep to show us the wonders of Wadi Rum had an interesting story to tell about Amman. He said he drove in Amman once, and that was it. A couple of years ago, he and a cousin of his hired a car and came to visit Amman. By miracle (you can imagine the trauma a person used to driving in the empty space of Wadi Rum would experience driving in the crowded, congested roads of the capital) they made it to the downtown area. The problem was how to get out of it. After several failed attempts and a minor car accident, the tour guide paid a taxi driver JD 10 to get them to the airport road. "How do you guys drive in Amman?" he asked at the conclusion of his story. "It is insane."

But the trip was, and would always be, also a nice break from the pressure of work, from the ceaseless ill-meant

hints, remarks and comments (in this unfair world of ours) of some colleagues and "superiors" whom you have done nothing to offend, and from the feeling that despite what you are doing (under the circumstances), things do not seem to be moving at all. The peace of mind one experiences driving with the spectacular Dead Sea to the right, sipping from a cup of coffee in the middle of the amazing Tafleeh hills, meditating in the quiet of the Dana Resthouse, sitting lazily in the shade at the foot of a Wadi Rum mountain, smoking an evening cigar your friend has brought from abroad (I am not a regular smoker) in the magnificent evening of Taybet Zaman, or standing on one of the highest points in Petra, gazing at the hills of Palestine — such peace of mind is unequalled.

The trip was not only psychologically rewarding but pleasurable and instructive as well. The geography of the areas we visited is truly amazing, which says much for Jordan's tourism potential. I never thought, before I took this trip, that Jordan has so much to offer to the visitor or tourist.

The Dead Sea is a unique experience. Where else in the world can you swim while reading a newspaper?

Much can be said about the beauty, the abundance and the variety of southern Jordan. If one were to find one word which describes it all, no one word can describe the southern part of Jordan — the hills to the left of the Dead Sea, the Tafleeh hills, the Dana hills, the Wadi Rum mountains, the Petra mountains — as the word museum. The south is a museum of rocks (of all shapes and colours), of hills and mountains (all shapes and colours), of soil (all shapes and colours), of plants (all shapes and colours), of birds, of reptiles, of animals, of ruins, etc.

There is so much for the poet, the writer, the traveller,

the geologist, the geographer, the scientist, the archaeologist, the anthropologist, the sociologist, the educator, the language specialist, the historian, the environmentalist, the vacationer, etc.

One thing, however, that stands above everything else is the relative virginity of the region. This is a region which has not yet been much discovered (and therefore corrupted and polluted) by your average picnickers and vacationers. Most of those who visit such areas seem to respect their beauty and integrity (some, as evident from the graffiti of sorts, obviously do not).

The south is a treasure which is worth seeing. For years, we Jordanians (in our picnics, trips and outings) have been going either west (Salt, Zai, the Jordan Valley, etc.) or north (Jerash, Ajloun, Irbid, Umm Qais, etc.). It is time people started going south.

Something weird also happens to you in the quiet of Dana, Wadi Rum and Petra: you ponder a lot about what you are doing, about your role in life, about your contribution, and about the impact you can or cannot make, compared with that made generations ago, at Petra or Wadi Rum. One leaves, when comparing the past to the present, with a sense of hollowness, emptiness and futility. Are we really the descendants of the Nabateans? Can we, who gossip, backbite, deal unfairly, speak lip-service, applaud and reward mediocrity and ignore and frustrate excellence, ever excel and achieve greatness? Time will only tell, and the generations which will come to look for the truth in our remains and ruins when we are long dead — the way we look for the truth about the generations which lived before us in the remains and ruins of Petra and Wadi Rum.

Defence of human rights needs to be fair and informed

By Khaled Abou Fadl

AUSTIN, Texas — The U.S. State Department recently issued a report on persecution of Christians, focusing on China and several Muslim countries. The release of that document has initiated a debate on the issues of religious persecution, human rights and U.S. policy.

As a member of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, I have evaluated cases of human rights violations, primarily in Muslim countries. One of the most recent examples involved a religious man from a Muslim country. He was visited by security forces at dawn, taken from his place of residence, beaten with cables hung in contorted positions and stung with electrical prods.

During the torture, he was taunted about his beliefs. Officers carrying out the torture yelled, where is your God now? If your God was here, we would torture him as well. Ultimately, his sister was brought from his home and threatened with rape in front of him.

Now I pose the following question. How would you feel if I informed you that the man was a Christian in a Muslim country? And how do your feelings change when I tell you that, in fact, the victim in this case was a Muslim, who was being tortured in a Muslim country?

A part of a church was demolished in Egypt because of unfair regulations, and that is an out-

rageous occurrence. But how do we consider this outrageousness in light of the fact that a mosque was closed for several years in Egypt because the government was unhappy with the types of teachings promoted in the mosque?

When we discuss religious persecution, we are dealing with a field in which people have particular sensitivities and particular sympathies for their own groups or religions. It is a highly politicised field in which emotions run high.

The human rights field is plagued with double standards and political convenience.

"In promoting human dignity, we must maintain fairness and balance. We cannot argue for one human right by violating or ignoring another. And we cannot emphasise the rights of one group and effectively de-emphasise the rights of others. Playing favourites is a human rights violation in itself."

In terms of religious persecution particularly in the context of Muslim countries, we must remind ourselves that it takes place in the context of rampant human rights violations. Additionally, religious persecution is socially complex and often makes complex phenomena within society such as communalism, tribalism and economic exploitation.

Family feuds can express themselves in religious terms. Or a government could be pitting one opposition group against another, or trying to divert the attention of its opposition towards religious conflict.

In the Islamic context, there is a long-established history of foreign powers claiming that they are protecting a particular religious minority in perpetuating offensive or aggressive policies against Muslim countries. For example, the invading armies of the Crusades would claim that they were intervening to protect Christians in Muslim countries.

tion is at the core of human rights, and human rights are indivisible.

In promoting human dignity, we must maintain fairness and balance. We cannot argue for one human right by violating or ignoring another. And we cannot emphasise the rights of one group and effectively de-emphasise the rights of others. Playing favourites is a human rights violation in itself.

In addressing the problem of religious persecution from the standpoint of U.S. policy, there must be, first and foremost, impartiality. Second, we must encourage and help independent non-governmental organisations that promote human rights from within the domestic context. We also must avoid reliance on anecdotal evidence as a basis for policy.

We should not rely on the ideological ravings of some writers in influencing policy. Such writers often use the label "politically Islamic" or "militant Islamic" to justify discriminatory and hostile policies.

There is a saying in the Muslim World that Muslim blood is the cheapest. However, every religious group would probably say that its blood is the cheapest. It is our duty to say that human dignity counts for everyone and all equally.

The writer is professor of Islamic law and human rights at the University of Texas at Austin. This article is reprinted from the Los Angeles Times.

Encryption is a valuable tool that should not be blunted

By Peter Wayne

BALTIMORE — Internet hype can turn old problems into new grave threats. The biggest threat may be concern over the use of encryption, or secret codes, to scramble information sent over the Internet and other computer networks.

Codes may thrill people who want to protect the business plans on their office computers and the love letters they send by e-mail, but they worry Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Louis J. Freeh.

Mr. Freeh is right to be concerned that encryption can limit the ability of law enforcement to gather electronic evidence from wiretaps and court-ordered searches. But he was wrong when he recently told the Senate Judiciary Committee that "technology and telecommunications well beyond the contemplation of the Framers" will bring "a terrible upset of the balance so wisely set forth in the Fourth Amendment."

In other words, he sees the balance tipping against the police, because they will have more difficulty conducting reasonable searches if more of the information they seek is encrypted.

Yet cryptography was not beyond the contemplation of the framers of the U.S. Constitution. Many of them were skilled code makers and code breakers themselves. David Kahn's book "The Codebreakers" tells how codes have affected history for more than 3,000 years.

According to Mr. Kahn, George Washington had to deal with the problem when a coded message was intercepted in August 1775 from Benjamin Church, a member of the Massachusetts Congress who was a spy for the British. The message, which was finally deciphered, told the English details of American troop movements.

As Mr. Kahn reveals, both sides in the Revolutionary war made extensive use of encryption. Benedict Arnold

designed the complex code that he used to sell out his country. James Lovell of the Continental Congress helped win the war by breaking the codes used by General Cornwallis.

After the war, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison communicated in their own private code. Benjamin Franklin devised a cipher for sending dispatches from Europe.

In writing the Bill of Rights, the founders did not forbid cryptography, although they knew how powerful a tool it could be. Nor did they suggest that the police be able to obtain the plain text of a coded message.

But that could happen under a measure sponsored by Senators Bob Kerrey and John McCain. The key to any code used to scramble information sent on the Internet would have to be given to the proper authorities. The Clinton administration supports similar measures.

James Bamford, in "The Puzzle Palace," describes how the FBI broke the case

of the gangsters who were communicating without telephone calls or letters. Agents discovered that the gangsters sent their shirts to Las Vegas to be dry cleaned — and that the number of shirts held the coded message.

No ban on cryptography will thwart creative crooks, but diligent police work can find cracks in the armour. The National Research Council urges that Congress invest in research to help the FBI better understand computers and codes.

Encryption makes it impossible for FBI agents to gather all the evidence they would like. But the answer is not to regulate, and in effect destroy, the use of coded messages. Criminals would probably find a way around the rules, and the rest of us could lose a powerful tool for protecting our privacy.

The writer is author of "Disappearing Cryptography." This article is reprinted from the New York Times.

LETTERS

Final freedom

To the Editor:

I HAVE followed the maelstrom in some British papers regarding Diana's involvement with an Arab Muslim, the son of Mohammad Al Fayed who would try anything to gain acceptance to the higher echelons of British society (after he "helped bring down the Conservative government by admitting he had given money to Conservative MPs") and the horror of the future King William's potential half brothers and/or sisters giving his future coronation "an Alexandrian air" with "Cleo and Mo" son and daughter of "Di and Dodi", as the Sunday Times had put it on Aug. 10, 1997.

Diana's death is about fragility: the fragility of happiness, of life, of innocence. The fragility of a conscience, of the silken (and not so silken) threads that bind us. She was like a bird killing herself against the bars of her gilded cage just before finally flying to freedom. Perhaps her greatest mistake was that she "would not go quietly" (as the interview given to Martin Bashir of the BBC, Panorama 1996, proved).

I hope that on some celestial plane (as her brother said "where no one can touch her now") she can be with Imad Al Fayed if she so chooses or with anyone else who can make her happy, though unfortunately not in this life. She may yet prove to be more of a minefield to the British monarchy in death than in her life.

Diala Al Jabri, Amman.

Need for new Mideast era

To the Editor:

I OFTEN reflect on the people who had their land taken away from them. They were born in some refugee camps and have been living there ever since. They, most likely, have brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts scattered throughout the world, in the diaspora, and they have never met them: they do not know whether they will ever enjoy the "luxury" of a family reunion.

These people are often stuck with the same heavy rhythm of uphill struggle, same daily hardship vocabulary (raids, arrests, demolitions, checkpoints, rubber bullets, death, closures, siege, and the like), and several unemployed family members adding up to the burden. The recurring challenge of securing the daily living is becoming ever more elusive. The accumulating sanitary, health and financial problems are worsened by the growing restrictions and closures, inducing despair and frustration into their tired soul.

Deprived of their civil rights and subjected to the worst prejudices, nothing they ever did warrants their misery; to them, the way out of their plight is beyond the ever receding horizon.

On the other hand, I draw a parallel and recall the Nuremberg laws, the ghetto system, concentration camps, and other forms of collective punishment.

All collective atrocities stem out of mere hatred and, at the helm of it, an individual who disregards the humanity of human beings and insists on defying world opinion. The affinities and dispositions of such an individual are usually based on false opinions or myth and to him, moderation is a sinful act, a taboo.

As I remember, one of the wise principles in politics is "not to make a puppet out of the weak."

Definitely there is a need for a new Middle East political arena, one which upholds only flexible and creative leadership with vision for reconciliation, prosperity and continuity. Such leadership will be a constituent of the "civilised Middle East club." The new era needs to do away with apprehension, mistrust and collective punishment. It requires statesmen of different calibre, not entrenched behind their own paranoia or myth. A fear, and moral good outweighs all moral evil. After all, the world is no longer divided into Greeks and barbarians.

Munther R. Hattab, Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Majali boasts successful economic record

By Tareq Ayyoub

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali said Wednesday that his government has succeeded in removing many obstacles that impeded foreign investments in the Kingdom.

But Dr. Majali, who was speaking to reporters at a press conference, admitted that his 24-man cabinet did not succeed in removing all these barriers.

"I cannot say that we have overcome them (obstacles) all. We have removed most of the impediments to investments, whether by encouraging investors, clarifying investment opportunities or changing the legislation that hamper investment in the Kingdom," the prime minister said in the two-hour press conference.

The premier, who was briefing reporters and columnists on the performance of his government in the past seven months, said the government also succeeded in changing the "behaviour of civil servants who work in (government) depart-

ments involved in the investment procedures."

"One of the main factors that drove foreign investors out of the country was the behaviour, slow work and lack of understanding of those employees," said Dr. Majali who assumed office on March 19.

He added that these measures attracted foreign investments far above previous levels.

The premier listed several economic laws that were enacted this year, including the Securities Law which was needed to advance the Companies Law.

Dr. Majali said the government will continue the implementation of the readjustment programme that was launched in 1989.

He pointed out that in the past few months, an improvement was recorded on the balance of account and noted that the government managed to maintain the inflation rate within a reasonable range.

Dr. Majali highlighted the foreign exchange reserve which increased to an "unprecedented figure."

He said exports have increased by six per cent in the first seven months of this year, compared with

the figures during the same period of 1996.

The prime minister said the government has controlled the public spending noting that his government aims "to reach a deficit-free budget in the coming year."

Dr. Majali added that among the factors which helped the Kingdom fulfil its economic programmes were "the rescheduling of foreign debts and the increase of foreign assistance from the United States and some other European countries."

"Such assistance helped boosting the foreign reserves at the Central Bank," the prime minister explained.

He expected the Central Bank and other commercial banks to reduce interest rate "gradually" in order to increase "liquidity" in the market.

Dr. Majali said that his foreign tour to several Arab and European countries succeeded in attracting foreign investments to the Kingdom.

He said that among those foreign investments that were proposed was a Qatari \$100 million hotel in Aqaba.

Fellowships for Master Programmes in the field of Water and Environmental Engineering in Delft, the Netherlands

In response to a request from the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of International Cooperation of the Netherlands provides ten fellowship for the next academic year, starting October 19, 1997. The fellowship covers all costs (tuition fee, living fee, living allowance and air travel) for a 12 month Master Programme at the International Institute for the Infrastructural, Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering (IHE) in Delft, the Netherlands. The training programme is carried out in the framework of the "Regional Jordanian/Palestinian Water and Environmental Sector Capacity Building Programme." Successful completion of the study leads to the Master of Engineering (MEng) degree.

The following Master Programmes are included in the project:

- Environmental Science and Technology
- Sanitary Engineering (Water Supply)
- Water Quality Management
- Water Resources Management
- Groundwater Hydrology

Detailed information on the above programmes may be found in the IHE brochure which may be consulted at the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

Admission requirements

Candidates with a BSc (minimum grade "good") in an appropriate field of science or engineering and with at least three years of working experience may apply.

Application

An application form may be collected from the Royal Netherlands Embassy (requests by telephone will not be accepted). The application form together with a curriculum vitae, three passport photos, certified academic transcripts and photocopies of academic diploma's are to be presented at the Embassy in a closed envelope indicating "IHE Master Programme." The Royal Netherlands Embassy (22, Embassy Street, Amman, Fourth Circle, opposite Prime Minister's Office) is open from 08:00 - 12:00 hrs except on Friday and Saturday. Information on this project can be obtained from IHE in the Netherlands (Department of Student Affairs: Tel +31 15 2151700), the Embassy cannot provide any information and does not accept any telephone calls on this project. The deadline for submission of the applications is September 15, 12:00 hrs.

Selection procedure

The Department of Student Affairs of IHE processes the applications and notifies the candidate whether he or she is academically admitted to the Master Programme. A number of candidates will be invited for an interview. The interviews will take place in Amman by the end of September. There are equal opportunities for candidates from the public sector, the private sector as well as from the NGO's. Female candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.

Iraq hopes to stabilise currency

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq hopes to stabilise its wildly fluctuating currency under the U.N. oil-for-food deal, the central bank has said. "We predict a stabilisation of the Iraqi dinar before the end of the year and implementation of the second phase of the oil-for-food deal will certainly contribute to this stabilisation," Central Bank Governor Issam Hawich said.

"The Iraqi economy is expected to post positive results in the second half of this year. This will boost the Iraqi currency," Mr. Hawich said, cited by the Iraqi Industrial Union newspaper.

The dollar, which has been the point of reference since the international economic embargo was placed on Iraq in 1990, was trading at 1,485 Iraqi dinars, down 100 dinars from a month ago. The latest improvement is due to a resumption of oil exports in August after a two-month interruption.

The dinar has traded between 1,200 to 1,600 to the dollar over the last three months.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Prices as at 3/09/97 18:18

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6936	160.93	2000.48	6.5595	1.9363	1.6663	13.7603	8.4664	136.47	1.9363
GB Sterling	1.4418	1.0000	166.09	2936.47	9.3671	2.7937	2.3977	19.3603	12.2456	166.09	2.7937
JP Yen	0.0062	0.0060	1.0000	333.33	0.0375	0.0110	0.0094	0.7559	0.4756	3.3333	0.0094
IT Lira	0.0005	0.0005	0.0030	1.0000	0.0136	0.0043	0.0036	113.63	73.66	1.0000	0.0043
FR Franc	0.1525	0.1408	0.0263	0.0074	1.0000	0.6555	0.5475	6.5595	4.0339	0.1525	0.6555
DM Mark	0.5193	0.4833	0.0893	0.0023	0.0154	1.0000	0.8366	6.5595	4.0339	0.5193	0.8366
CHF Franc	0.6036	0.5691	0.1064	0.0027	0.0182	1.1763	1.0000	6.5595	4.0339	0.6036	1.1763
SE Krona	0.0746	0.0694	0.0133	0.0087	0.0154	0.0154	0.0154	1.0000	0.8456	0.0746	0.0154
NOK Krone	0.1200	0.1125	0.0212	0.0141	0.0248	0.0248	0.0248	1.1763	1.0000	0.1200	0.0248
DK Krone	0.1366	0.1281	0.0248	0.0173	0.0279	0.0279	0.0279	1.1763	1.0000	0.1366	0.0279
EUR Euro	0.0052	0.0049	0.0009	0.0003	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	1.0000	0.0015

Middle Eastern Currencies

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6936	160.93	2000.48	6.5595	1.9363	1.6663	13.7603	8.4664	136.47	1.9363
GB Sterling	1.4418	1.0000	166.09	2936.47	9.3671	2.7937	2.3977	19.3603	12.2456	166.09	2.7937
JP Yen	0.0062	0.0060	1.0000	333.33	0.0375	0.0110	0.0094	0.7559	0.4756	3.3333	0.0094
IT Lira	0.0005	0.0005	0.0030	1.0000	0.0136	0.0043	0.0036	113.63	73.66	1.0000	0.0043
FR Franc	0.1525	0.1408	0.0263	0.0074	1.0000	0.6555	0.5475	6.5595	4.0339	0.1525	0.6555
DM Mark	0.5193	0.4833	0.0893	0.0023	0.0154	1.0000	0.8366	6.5595	4.0339	0.5193	0.8366
CHF Franc	0.6036	0.5691	0.1064	0.0027	0.0182	1.1763	1.0000	6.5595	4.0339	0.6036	1.1763
SE Krona	0.0746	0.0694	0.0133	0.0087	0.0154	0.0154	0.0154	1.0000	0.8456	0.0746	0.0154
NOK Krone	0.1200	0.1125	0.0212	0.0141	0.0248	0.0248	0.0248	1.1763	1.0000	0.1200	0.0248
DK Krone	0.1366	0.1281	0.0248	0.0173	0.0279	0.0279	0.0279	1.1763	1.0000	0.1366	0.0279
EUR Euro	0.0052	0.0049	0.0009	0.0003	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015	1.0000	0.0015

Energy

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
Brent	18.54	13.57	2282.00	210.00	100.00	30.00	25.00	200.00	120.00	300.00	30.00
WTI	18.54	13.57	2282.00	210.00	100.00	30.00	25.00	200.00	120.00	300.00	30.00
Bonny	18.54	13.57	2282.00	210.00	100.00	30.00	25.00	200.00	120.00	300.00	30.00
UL Gas	202.00	150.00	30000.00	3000.00	1500.00	450.00	350.00	3000.00	1800.00	4500.00	450.00

Mid-East Currencies

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.1951	31.76	3970.56	125.00	37.50	31.25	250.00	150.00	375.00	37.50
AE Dirham	0.3723	0.2738	43.75	5468.75	168.75	50.62	42.18	337.50	206.25	515.62	50.62
KW Dinar	3.2776	2.3856	385.00	48125.00	1500.00	450.00	375.00	3000.00	1800.00	4500.00	450.00
QH Dinar	0.5770	0.4202	67.36	8420.56	262.50	78.75	65.62	525.00	312.50	787.50	78.75
CY Pound	1.86	1.3604	219.36	27360.56	850.00	255.00	212.50	1700.00	1037.50	2618.75	255.00

Metal Prices

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
Gold (oz)	321.4	232.1	36800.00	4580.00	1400.00	420.00	340.00	2800.00	1700.00	4200.00	420.00
Platinum (oz)	410.5	295.5	46400.00	5800.00	1800.00	540.00	440.00	3600.00	2200.00	5400.00	540.00
CU (3 Months)	2140	1540	240000.00	30000.00	9000.00	2700.00	2200.00	18000.00	11000.00	27000.00	2700.00
ZN (3 Months)	1140	820	126000.00	15600.00	4800.00	1440.00	1160.00	9600.00	5800.00	14400.00	1440.00
Lead (3 Months)	648	468	73600.00	9200.00	2800.00	840.00	680.00	5600.00	3400.00	8400.00	840.00
Ni (3 Months)	16700	12100	1904000.00	238000.00	72000.00	21600.00	17600.00	144000.00	88000.00	216000.00	21600.00

Currency Deposit Rates (Bil)

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
USD	5.50	5.50	5.73	5.81	5.80	5.80	5.80	5.80	5.80	5.80	5.80
GBP	7.06	7.18	7.34	7.38	7.31	7.31	7.31	7.31	7.31	7.31	7.31
JPY	0.45	0.46	0.56	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46
DEM	3.08	3.13	3.31	3.31	3.39	3.39	3.39	3.39	3.39	3.39	3.39
FRF	3.28	3.30	3.42	3.52	3.62	3.62	3.62	3.62	3.62	3.62	3.62
CHF	1.15	1.33	1.52	1.82	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72
ITL	6.76	6.71	6.60	6.37	6.38	6.38	6.38	6.38	6.38	6.38	6.38

Main Equity Indices

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
New York	7888.07	5788.07	888800.00	110000.00	34000.00	10200.00	8300.00	68000.00	41000.00	102000.00	10200.00
London	4975.8	3575.8	55600.00	6950.00	2100.00	630.00	510.00	4100.00	2500.00	6300.00	630.00
Paris	18735.17	13525.17	209000.00	25800.00	7800.00	2340.00	1900.00	15600.00	9500.00	23400.00	2340.00
Frankfurt	2917.92	2117.92	32600.00	4050.00	1240.00	372.00	302.00	2416.00	1450.00	3720.00	372.00
Stockholm	1103.65	793.65	12440.00	1555.00	480.00	144.00	116.00	944.00	580.00	1440.00	144.00

Energy

	US Dollar	GB Sterling	JP Yen	IT Lira	FR Franc	DM Mark	CHF Franc	SE Krona	NOK Krone	DK Krone	EUR Euro
Coffee (lb)	182.42	132.42	20800.00	2580.00	780.00	234.00	190.00	1560.00	950.00	2340.00	234.00
Cocoa (lb)	11.00	7.90	1210.00	151.00	46.00	13.80	11.20	90.00	55.00	138.00	13.80
Sugar (lb)	33.45	24.05	3660.00	457.00	139.00	41.70	33.90	271.00	163.00	417.00	41.70
Wheat (lb)	14.50	10.50	1620.00	202.00	62.00	18.60	15.10	121.00	74.00	186.00	18.60
Soybean (lb)	22.77	16.40	2490.00	308.00	94.00	28.20	22.50	180.00	110.00	282.00	28.20
Barley (lb)	1.00	0.72	108.00	13.50	4.10	1.23	1.00	8.00	5.00	12.30	1.23
Rice (lb)	1.00	0.72	108.00	13.50	4.10	1.23	1.00	8.00	5.00	12.30	1.23

JOD Cross Rates

	Currency	Buy	Sell
Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Spot	GB Sterling	1.1279	1.1335
Spot	DE Mark	0.3884	0.3883
Spot	CH Franc	0.4707	0.4731
Spot	FR Franc	0.1148	0.1154
Spot	JP Yen	0.5848	0.5877
Spot	NL Guilder	0.343	0.3447
Spot	IT Lira	0.2065	0.2085

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Hafez: Ministry of Finance is the authorised entity to manage proceeds from privatisation process

**** FINANCE MINISTER** Suleiman Hafez has stressed that his ministry is the authorised party in managing the funds and the proceeds from the privatisation process should the Jordan Investment Corporation law be replaced. He indicated that it is premature to talk about setting up a special fund for the privatisation proceeds.

Replying to a question, Mr. Hafez, who is also the board chairman of the corporation, said all the funds that will be obtained as a result of the privatisation process, will flow to and be managed by the Ministry of Finance. He emphasised that nothing of the proceeds will be used for recurrent spending.

The minister explained that the ministry will work on investing the proceeds to compensate the treasury for part of its lost profit. The other portion will be invested in additional infrastructure projects and some productive socio-economic schemes.

Replying to another question about the reasons for not rescheduling Jordanian debts, the minister said that the recent rescheduling deal which was agreed with the Paris Club was the last due to the economic growth achieved lately by the Kingdom. "That means there is no need to reschedule these debts," he stressed.

In a separate story, the head of the Executive Unit for Privatisation at the Prime Ministry has specified practical steps which he described as "the ideal" to utilise the proceeds from selling the government projects and equities. The first step, Adel Qudah indicated, is to amend or replace the law of the Jordan Investment Corporation (JIC).

"It is more appropriate to neutralise the funds and transfer the proceeds from privatisation to special accounts at banks and authorise the concerned parties to manage the accounts temporarily in order to achieve the best possible return," Mr. Qudah said.

He added: "At the same time the JIC should freeze utilising any proceeds or funds transferred to it in accordance with the current law until the law is amended." Mr. Qudah emphasised that amending or replacing the JIC law should be in harmony with the economic adjustment programme and the drive towards privatisation.

The head of the privatisation unit underlined the importance of implementing the privatisation process by stressing that it has become a must for development in light of increasing burden on the government in social, administrative, legal and organisational spheres. "The government should give full attention to execute these basic tasks away from direct commercial and industrial operations," he emphasised.

Mr. Qudah said a portion of the proceeds and the profits of the planned fund could be used to meet social needs such as combating unemployment and poverty but not through direct assistance. To the contrary, he added, assistance should be in financing small and medium-size projects as well as cooperatives in addition to investing in promising sectors such as high education, specialised medical and other technical sectors.

He emphasised that the proceeds should be invested on sound financial and commercial basis to ensure enough returns that would finance future expansion and compensate the treasury for any drop that might affect earnings due to any losses. (Al Aswaj + Al Ra'i).

Committee willing to help Jordanians export to Britain

AMMAN (Petra) — COMET, the Committee on Middle East Trade in the United Kingdom, has been involved over the past two years in encouraging British investors to invest in Jordan and the committee plans to pursue this endeavour in the coming summer, according to COMET Chairman Ron Hollis.

Addressing a round-table meeting with Jordanian businessmen, convened to discuss trade relations between the United Kingdom and Jordan, Mr. Hollis said COMET will do its utmost to help Jordan to increase its sales to British markets so that the Kingdom can partially address the balance of trade which is in favour of Britain.

He said that the investment climate in the Kingdom seems to be improving gradually, especially in the wake of the introduction of economic legislation that encourages investors.

Hamdi Tabbaa, chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA), addressed the meeting and outlined the positive trends in the Jordanian economy noting that the restructuring programme has had its beneficial effects on the Kingdom's national economy.

He pointed out that the gross domestic product at fixed prices rose in 1996 by 5.2 per cent while inflation is not expected to rise more than three per cent this year.

Mr. Tabbaa also noted that the deficit in the 1997 fiscal budget is not expected to exceed 3.1 per cent, down from 4.9 per cent in the past year, at a time when the deficit in the balance of payments dropped from 3.9 per cent in 1995 to 3.1 per cent in 1996.

Mr. Tabbaa also outlined the Kingdom's economic reform laws that cover the fields of investment, taxes, specifications and standards and trade and mining.

Jordan denies asking Israeli firms to bid for power project

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan Wednesday denied press reports that it had specifically invited Israeli companies to bid for the construction of a power station in the Kingdom.

An Israeli daily newspaper reported Wednesday that the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources had invited Israeli companies to bid for the project adding that the Israeli embassy in Amman conveyed the invitation to its foreign ministry.

"We did not invite any specific party for the bid," Ministry Secretary General Ahmad Bashir told the Jordan Times.

The report added that some Israeli groups including the Israel Electric Company had shown interest in the bid even though the company probably would not participate.

Dr. Bashir said the ministry had issued a general notice for prequalification of sponsors in mid July announcing its intention to have its next thermal power project with a 400 kv, 132 kv switchyard as well as support facilities implemented on a build-own-operate (BOO) basis.

Jordan currently has a total electricity generating capacity of around 1,100 MW, 390 MW of which is generated from three power stations in Aqaba producing 130 MW each. Jordan is in need of enhancing the output to sustain the increased industrial and population growth.

The new thermal power station is expected to be in the range of 300 MW thereby increasing the total generating capacity by 25-30 per cent by the year 2001.

Dr. Bashir said the ministry has yet to decide on a site for the facility which is expected to commence commercial operations by year 2001.

He added that the ministry has appointed K&M Engineering Company of the United States to assist the ministry in sponsoring pre-qualification and request for proposal preparation (RFP).

Dr. Bashir said that 170 international companies have already shown interest at this preliminary stage.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 03/09/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	PERCENT
320.000	231.000	ARAB BANK	15.0	1.23	126	3240	1063910	320.00	326.00	6.00	1.88
2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	34	23850	46535	1.94	1.96	0.02	1.04
1.210	0.890	MID. EAST. INV. BK.	60.4	0.00	8	4000	3673	3.21	3.22	0.01	0.31
2.480	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	9.0	6.94	5	1750	3970	2.26	2.28	0.02	0.88
5.200	4.550	THE HOUSING BK.	14.2	4.08	2	1100	5225	4.75	4.75	0.00	0.00
4.180	2.440	JOR. EXCH. BANK	12.6	0.00	3	1345	4281	3.25	3.25	0.00	0.00
1.050	0.760	JOR. GULF BANK	6.5	9.21	3	11900	9644	1.76	1.76	0.00	0.00
4.050	3.520	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	16.2	3.02	36	11142	44467	3.96	3.98	0.02	0.51
3.800	3.080	JOR. INV. FTR. BANK	21.9	0.00	1	250	853	3.40	3.41	0.01	0.29
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 234.38	CHNG: +1.58	220	58432	1182180				
2.210	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSR.	5.1	8.38	9	6250	11257	1.77	1.79	0.02	1.13
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 115.02	CHNG: +0.11	9	6250	11257				
1.820	1.830	JOR. ELECTRIC PHN.	8.1	5.95	31	32750	55138	1.67	1.68	0.01	0.60
6.100	4.100	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	14.6	4.21	1	1400	6650	4.75	4.75	0.00	0.00
1.050	0.800	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	16.4	4.61	2	2100	7002	2.80	2.82	0.02	0.71
1.550	0.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	67	63000	92389	1.44	1.43	-0.01	-0.70
1.010	0.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.8	6.52	3	5768	5288	1.92	1.92	0.00	0.00
1.810	1.480	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	27.7	0.00	3	200	108	1.08	1.08	0.00	0.00
1.810	1.150	MID. EAST. HOTELS	19.5	0.00	2	750	960	1.27	1.28	0.01	0.78
3.720	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	8.8	0.00	20	63925	214566	3.35	3.36	0.01	0.30
1.220	0.930	ARAB EDUCATION	9.8	0.00	32	8480	8825	3.03	3.05	0.02	0.66
2.230	1.540	UNITED TRADING	8.2	6.36	14	5300	9235	1.74	1.73	-0.01	-0.57
1.010	0.640	UNION LAB. DEV.	9	0.00	5	20750	15555	1.74	1.75	0.01	0.57
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 110.82	CHNG: +0.28	159	204790	415713				
4.450	3.220	JOR. CORP. FACT.	26.2	2.83	13	15700	61225	3.88	3.89	0.01	0.26
4.140	2.450	JOR. PETROL. & REFIN.	10.5	2.63	3	2800	38800	3.88	3.89	0.01	0.26
10.440	9.070	JOR. PETROL. & REFIN.	10.1	8.51	18	2668	27919	10.43	10.45	0.02	0.19
1.470	1.050	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	10.2	8.47	3	1300	1536	1.20	1.18	-0.02	-1.65
1.260	0.820	JOR. WOOLLEN IND.	9	0.00	82	809	892	1.08	1.07	-0.01	-0.92
7.150	5.800	JOR. WOOLLEN IND.	9.9	3.25	5	3456	21181	6.00	6.15	0.15	2.50
4.300	3.040	ARAB PHARM. IND.	11.9	4.64	54	14092	60975	4.28	4.31	0.03	0.70
1.800	1.480	ARAB CHEM. IND.	19.8	4.65	3	400	6975	6.45	6.45	0.00	0.00
1.530	1.050	ARAB INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	3	650	715	1.14	1.10	-0.04	-3.55
5.650	4.400	DAL ALDANA DV. INV.	12.5	4.92	15	4764	128279	5.50	5.53	0.03	0.54
3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.3	10.96	6	1450	3760	2.25	2.28	0.03	1.33
1.250	0.850	LIVESTOCK & FEEDING	9.9	0.00	16	12800	6016	1.47	1.47	0.00	0.00
1.290	1.000	NATL. PAPER CONV. IND.	33.0	0.00	10	5750	6258	1.08	1.08	0.00	0.00
1.250	0.810	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	16	10900	6082	1.54	1.56	0.02	1.29
1.250	0.810	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	26	12100	7079	1.58	1.58	0.00	0.00
1.940	1.330	JOR. NOODLE IND.	13.7	0.00	3	2000	1280	1.65	1.64	-0.01	-0.61
2.980	1.520	UNY. CHEM. IND.	6.58	1.60	1	160	1202	1.62	1.62	0.00	0.00
1.920	1.330	JOR. SULPHUR-CHEN.	9	0.00	7	6750	4233	1.62	1.62	0.00	0.00
1.670	1.120	ARAB PHARM. CHEN.	17.5	5.11	76	38900	53012	1.33	1.37	0.04	3.00
1.880	1.180	UNY. PHOS. IND.	7.7	0.00	22	21650	27846	1.29	1.28	-0.01	-0.78
1.510	0.910	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	12.5	10.75	24	10500	9718	1.91	1.93	0.02	1.05
2.620	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	14.4	4.88	3	1250	1918	1.55	1.53	-0.02	-1.32
1.070	0.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.8	0.00	3	3600	3096	1.86	1.86	0.00	0.00
2.090	1.340	JAY TRADING	16.7	0.00	15	7500	7890	1.59	1.61	0.02	1.26
1.330	1.010	INTL. TOBACCO	6.6	0.00	18	12998	15996	1.19	1.20	0.01	0.84
1.160	0.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	51.4	0.00	50	35200	39573	1.12	1.13	0.01	0.89
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 121.58	CHNG: -0.07	421	249500	492391				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 172.60	CHNG: +0.88	809	518972	2201541				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 03/09/1997											
710	410	MACH. REP. REPAIR	9	0.00	4	8000	4000	1.30	1.30	0.00	0.00
1.650	0.950	JOR. TRADE PAC.	10.7	0.00	2	1500	600	1.39	1.40	0.01	0.72
1.550	1.050	ZARA FOR INVESTMENT	72.2	0.00	3	10000	11000	1.10	1.10	0.00	0.00
950	540	JOR. FIV. INV. CO.	9	0.00	38	88550	53049	1.58	1.60	0.02	1.27
840	660	UNION INV. SOI	9	0.00	25	89750	13377	1.72	1.73	0.01	0.58
1.070	0.570	ARAB FIV. INV. CO.	9	0.00	44	116577	45464	1.38	1.39	0.01	0.72
950	610	AL-DANILAH 751	72.0	0.00	16	14058	6992	1.74	1.75	0.01	0.58
730	490	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	7	4850	2423	1.49	1.50	0.01	0.67
1.800	0.570	ARAB IND. INV. TRAR	44.9	0.00	24	2700	1082	1.39	1.39	0.00	0.00
960	400	NATL. MULL. ENR. HEMCO	9	0.00	33	52450	23603	1.45	1.45	0.00	0.00
820	450	READY MIX CONCRETE	10.7	0.00	1	5000	4450	1.90	1.89	-0.01	-0.53
1.800	1.110	JORDAN STEEL	34.4	6.58	4	4400	3144	1.75	1.75	0.00	0.00
730	480	ARAB ELECT. IND.	9	0.00	1	7500	3675	1.64	1.64	0.00	0.00
1.880	1.180	HIDEAST PHARM. 751	7.7	0.00	2	694	269	1.74	1.74	0.00	0.00
1.700	0.950	RAZ. PHARM. 851	9	0.00	36	41430	26770	1.70	1.73	0.03	1.76
1.570	0.290	IND. ENR.	9	0.00	25	32638	10116	1.72	1.70	-0.02	-1.16
860	720	IND. CERAMIC	18.4	0.00	12	4100	2879	1.72	1.70	-0.02	-1.16
820	450	NATL. POLYMER	9	0.00	3	7500	5226	1.59	1.61	0.02	1.26
1.000	0.700	NAT. ALUMINUM 751	98.8	0.00	16	15711	7225	1.72	1.72	0.00	0.00
860	590	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.4	16.67	15	15700	9422	1.60	1.60	0.00	0.00
GRAND TOTAL			291	499283	234857						

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Push yourself today to accomplish practical aims which you have been neglecting. Consult with one who has an interest in you and be active in the process of your career activities from knowledgeable people.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your judgement is highly sensitive today, so don't lose one precious moment in using it. Good friends can provide the backing which you need to complete a new project you have in mind, thereby becoming quite successful.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You should not confide your plans for career activities to others today. Your venture will be more successful without others casting doubt. Listen to your mate for suggestions on how to make your efforts prosperous.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Join with others who have similar ideas to your own. Use great care in your personal relationships today. Spend a joyful evening at home with your loved ones and relax for the days ahead will be quite stressful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Communicate with your superiors today and you can accomplish a great deal. Opportunity exists to improve your credit, career, and civic affairs, so make the best of any situations which come in your direction.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You should not be afraid to branch out today in several different directions, since change will keep you on your toes. You may need to take a trip to improve your situation with business activities, so defiantly make the necessary plans.

Chang squeezes through; Seles, Agassi edged out of U.S. Open

Williams to meet Spirlea in semi-final

NEW YORK (AFP) — Monica Seles lost a match she should have won and Michael Chang won a match he should have lost as the paths of the second-ranked players in the world diverged at the U.S. Open on Tuesday.

Chang, the second seed who inherited the mantle of U.S. Open favourite in the wake of Pete Sampras' shocking defeat on Monday, needed all of his trademark tenacity to overcome France's Cedric Pioline 6-3, 0-6, 5-7, 7-5, 6-1.

Chang trailed 2-5 in the fourth set, but won 11 of the last 12 games to take the match and line up a quarter-final clash with the next-highest seeded player left in the draw, No. 10 Marcelo Rios of Chile.

Seles squandered a match point against Irina Spirlea before the 11th-seeded Romanian came back to win 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (10/8), 6-3 to reach the first Grand Slam semi-final of her career.

Seles, whose nine Grand Slam titles include the 1991 and 1992 U.S. Opens, said it was particularly painful to bow out after having a chance to win the match in the second-set tiebreaker.

"I felt I should have won the match," Seles said. "I have to give her credit, she played some great tennis. She didn't choke when she was up. She went for all her shots at every point."

Chang, on the other hand, appeared headed for a certain exit. When Pioline broke him to lead 4-2 in the fourth, then held for 5-2, Chang's hopes of adding a second Grand Slam title to the French Open crown he won in 1989 looked doomed.

But he broke the Frenchman in the next game to start a run of seven straight games that took him to a 2-0 lead in the fifth.

He saved two break points in the 12th game of the fourth before he finally took the set when the tiring Pioline hit a cross-court volley wide.

"I think the fourth set, when I was leading, he tried to make me run a lot more and make me play more



Second seed Michael Chang from the United States hits a return to Frenchman Cedric Pioline during their fourth round U.S. Open match (Reuters photo)

shots," Pioline said. "I was tired and he played well."

Pioline finally held his serve to narrow the gap to 2-1 in the fifth, but despite break chances in both the fourth and sixth games, the exhausted Frenchman couldn't come back.

"I was starting to cramp. I think he saw I was tired and he tried to make me run. Even with this I had two or three break points. I was playing the best I could do. Maybe is why he is No. 2 in the world and I'm not," Pioline said.

Chang advanced to a quarter-final clash with Rios, who beat seventh seed Sergi Bruguera of Spain 7-5, 6-2, 6-4.

Australian Pat Rafter, the 13th seed, derailed former world number one Andre Agassi's bid for a second U.S. Open title with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-3 fourth-round victory.

Rafter, who has reached

five finals this year but hasn't won a tournament, said the Agassi's lack of matches might have told in the end.

"It was just the one little break in the end," Rafter said of his fourth-set break for a 5-3 lead. "That's just me having more matches than Andre."

Agassi was especially unhappy since that game included a double fault and two other errors.

"I basically donated my serve there at the end," Agassi said. "That's a long way to fight back from. I just wish I would have made him earn it a little more."

Rafter next faces unseeded Swede Magnus Larsson, who defeated South African Wayne Ferreira 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Agassi's departure was a blow for U.S. fans, but another flamboyant American, 17-year-old Venus Williams, picked up the slack as she advanced to the semi-finals in her first U.S. Open.

Williams defeated unseeded Sandrine Testud of France 7-5, 7-5, to line up a semi-final meeting with Spirlea.

Spirlea, whose previous best Grand Slam performance was a quarter-final loss to Martina Hingis at the Australian Open in January, rallied from 0-40 to hold serve in the second game of the third set against Seles.

Then she broke for a 2-1 lead and broke again in the final game of the match.

"I would really like the game back when I was 40-love on her serve," Seles said. "That's a big one to let out of your hands like that."

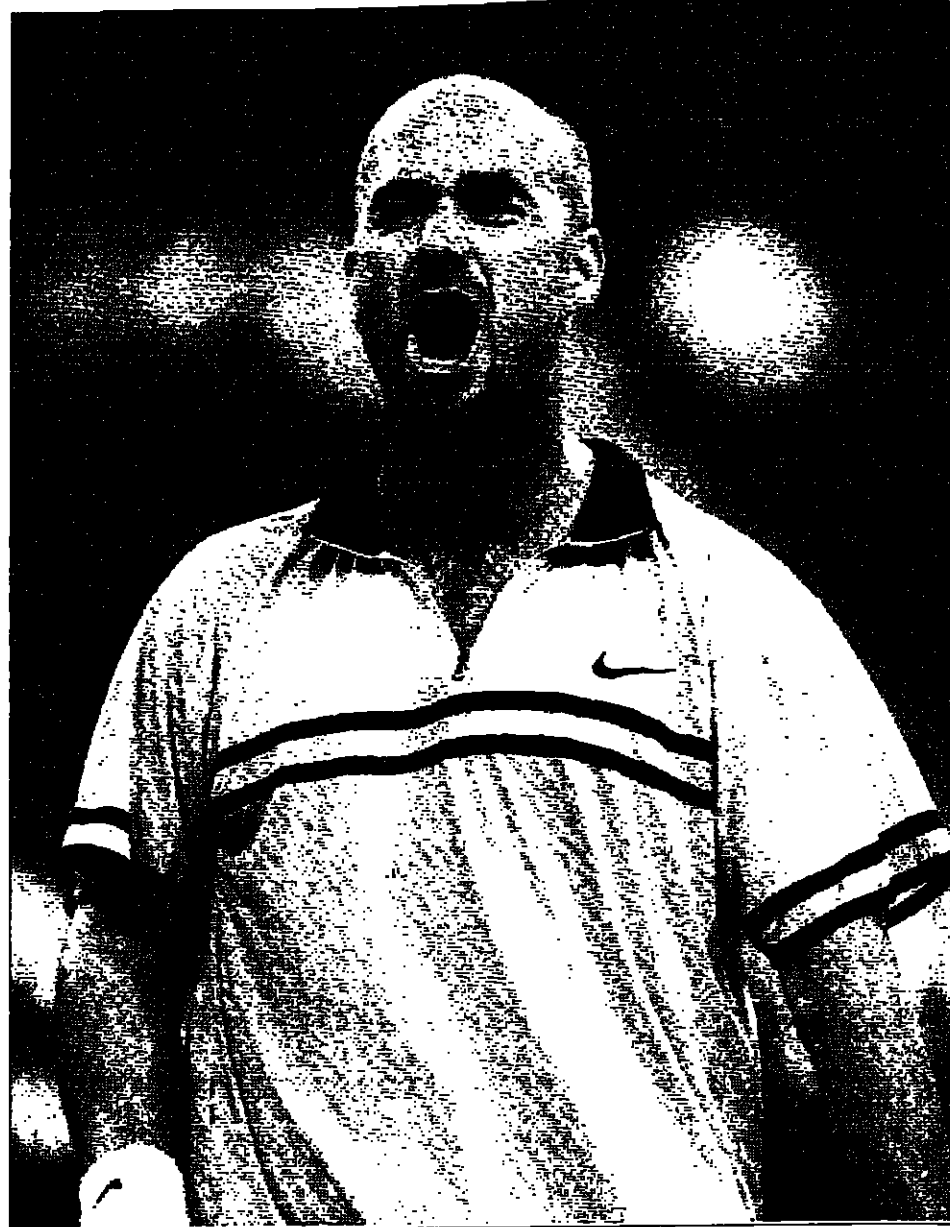
"It would be nice to have a 2-love lead. To lose five points at that critical stage of a match, it's not a good sign."

Seles made her earliest exit from the U.S. Open since her third-round defeat in 1990.

U.S. Open diary

Notes and quotes from the U.S. Open tennis championships:

Spirlea wins match and extra prizes: Irina Spirlea upset second seed Monica



American Andre Agassi yells after missing a shot during his fourth round U.S. Open match against Patrick Rafter, of Australia. Agassi lost 3-6 6-7 6-4 3-6 to end his U.S. Open (Reuters photo)



Australian Patrick Rafter celebrates winning the second set in a tie-breaker during his U.S. Open match against American Andre Agassi in New York. Rafter and Agassi met in the fourth round of the championships (Reuters photo)

Seles here Tuesday at the U.S. Open, winning her a chance at her first Grand Slam title and a \$300,000 top prize. But the 23-year-old Romanian also profited from a promise with coach Max Pace for reaching her first Grand Slam semi-final. They vowed to buy each other presents if Spirlea reached a Slam semi-final. "At the beginning we had a bet like I am going to make semi-final. I have to make a present for them or they have to make a present for me," she said. "So I have to do it for two of them, for my coach and for my manager." So what will it be? "They know what they want," she said. "I'm not going to tell you."

Football gives Rios a kick: Chilean football rivals can be thankful Marcelo Rios discovered tennis. The 10th-seeded U.S. Open quarter-finalist said he would have been better on the professional football fields than he is on the pro tennis courts. "I think I would have been better in soccer," he said. "I like soccer, like all South Americans. Soccer is the biggest sport in South America. I don't know why I'm playing tennis." But Rios knows where his true talent is. "I never play soccer professional-like. I only played in school, with my friends," he said. "Nothing like I want to be a soccer player. If you ask me right

now, I prefer to play tennis."

Night and day: Pete Sampras and Michael Chang played extended U.S. Open fourth-round matches that delayed night matches on the main stadium court and annoyed fans arriving for night-session matches. Fans entered the grounds expecting to walk into the stadium for night action but were not allowed into the 23,000-seat facility because the ongoing match was from the day ticketed session. That meant night spectators could watch junior matches on outer courts or do what most did, crowd television to watch the intense men's action.



American Venus Williams sprints to the net as she celebrates her U.S. Open quarter-final victory over Sandrine Testud from France. Williams defeated Testud 7-5 7-5 to advance to the semi-finals (Reuters photo)



Irina Spirlea celebrates her upset victory over second seed Monica Seles from the United States in their U.S. Open quarter final match. Spirlea defeated Seles 6-7 7-6 6-3 (Reuters photo)

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AL MARA' WAL SATOUR (Arabic)

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Grieving McCoist pulls out of Scotland game

Pressure mounts to cancel World Cup Clash

GLASGOW (AFP) — The growing revolt over the decision to go ahead with Scotland's World Cup qualifier with Belarus on Saturday spread to the players Wednesday when star striker Ally McCoist insisted he will not play.

The player's protest immediately put further pressure on the Scottish Football Association (SFA) to reconsider their decision to play on the same day as the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Earlier, Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly backed Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar's attempts to persuade the football chiefs to call the game off.

McCoist has asked not to

be considered should the game still go ahead with a 3pm kick-off, at the same time as the funeral cortege of Princess Diana will be heading to the church in her home village.

Speaking on BBC Radio, the Rangers ace said: "I have spoken to Craig Brown (Scotland manager) this morning and I have said to him that from a purely personal point of view I don't think I could focus 100 per cent on the match on Saturday."

"I don't think I could do myself justice, the team justice or the fans justice if I was involved on Saturday and have asked him not to include me in his selection for the starting line-up or

the substitutes bench.

"I have to qualify that by saying if the game was going ahead Scotland would not have a bigger supporter than me, and it's nothing against the fans or the teams but I don't think I could concentrate 100 per cent."

McCoist's withdrawal followed an earlier plea from former Scotland striker Denis Law to the Scotland players to refuse to play in the match.

On what is a day of national mourning, Scotland's Saturday's clash is the only major sporting event not to have been postponed in tribute.

Yeboah set for Hamburg switch

LEEDS (AFP) — Tony Yeboah is set to return to the Bundesliga to play for Hamburg in a £1 million deal (about \$1.6 million) that will finally bring to end an unhappy period with Leeds United.

English Premiership giants Leeds have agreed the fee with the German club, and Yeboah has accepted personal terms, but the transfer is subject to a medical examination.

The test, normally a formality, could yet prove to be an obstacle as the 31-year-old striker has not played in the Leeds first team since falling out with boss George Graham in March.

Yeboah, who cost Leeds £3.4 million from Eintracht Frankfurt in January 1995, recently turned down a move to Newell's Old Boys of Argentina as he refused to move his family away from Europe.

Yeboah, becomes the fourth high-profile player to leave Elland Road in the past two months following the departures of Brian Deane (to Sheffield United), Ian Rush (Newcastle) and Tony Dorigo (Torino).

Olympic chief clears Cape Town and Stockholm

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Cape Town and Stockholm were cleared of any wrongdoing in their campaign to win the 2004 Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Wednesday.

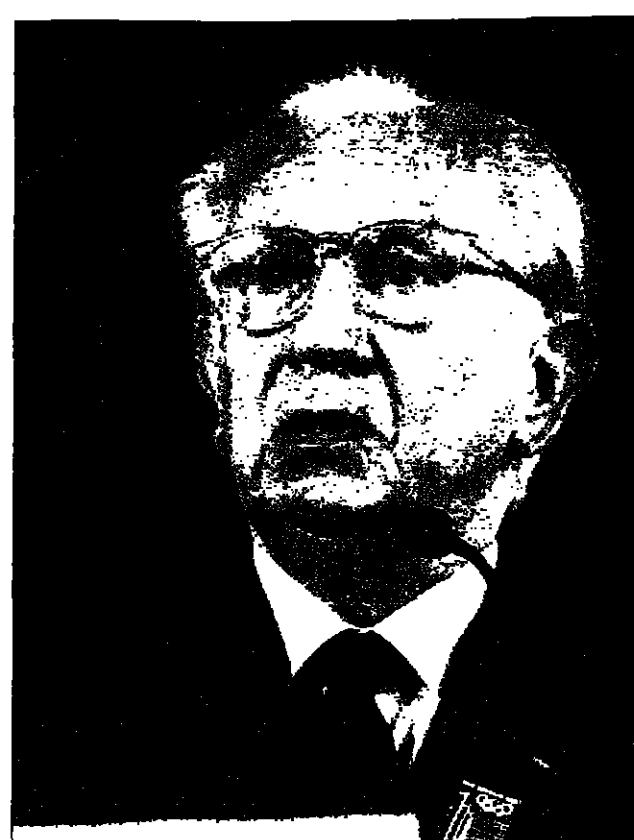
"We have never doubted the total good faith and intentions of Stockholm and Cape Town," IOC Director General Francois Carrard said.

Stockholm had been accused of offering to transport furniture back home for visiting IOC members while Cape Town was alleged to have paid for IOC members' wives to fly to Lausanne for Friday's vote.

"Stockholm had nothing to answer while the National Olympic Committee for South Africa has apologized," Carrard said.

"Only three or four wives accepted," NOCSA treasurer Kurt Hipper said. "We don't believe this contravened any IOC rules whatever. It was done openly and documented. We wanted to give wives the chance of sharing in what may be an historic occasion."

Africa has never staged the Games. The committee paid for



International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Juan Antonio Samaranch addresses the audience during the opening ceremony of the 106th IOC session. On September 5 a decision will be announced naming the host city for the 2004 Summer Olympics (Reuters photo)

first class return air tickets. It did not pay hotel bills. Bidding cities are limited

to making gifts worth \$200 to IOC members. Carrard said the wives

would not be asked to refund the tickets.

"It was not a secret," Hipper said. He said Cape Town represented an African bid supported by the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa and the Organisation for African Unity.

Carrard said the buildup to an Olympic venue was always fraught with suspicion.

"There are always insinuations, plots, rumours," he said. "As far as we are concerned the five bidding cities are on an absolutely equal footing as far as standards are concerned."

Hipper said he did not think that what many saw as a gaffe would hurt Cape Town's chances.

"It would be sad if this in any way influenced the vote," he added.

The five bidding cities — Cape Town, Athens, Buenos Aires, Rome and Stockholm — need a majority of 54 votes to win. Cape Town Bid Committee chief executive officer Chris Ball said no clear favourite had emerged.

"All of the cities in the final straight are in a bunch. Every city rightly thinks it can still win," he said.

Athens aiming to bring 2004 Olympics home

LAUSANNE (AFP) — The city that was the founding place of the Olympic movement wants the Games to finally return home.

Athens, which missed out on the Centennial Olympics when they were awarded to Atlanta, believes it has corrected the mistakes of the past and now has the infrastructure and know-how to be the host city of sport's greatest spectacle in 2004.

The IOC members will have to decide whether Athens' case has been helped or harmed by the recent World Athletics Championships.

Poor attendances and some early organisational glitches sparked criticism of Athens from International Amateur Athletic Federation president Primo Nebiolo — but Nebiolo has his own agenda.

The roly-poly Italian is a prime mover behind the Rome bid for the 2004 Games — a bid that many believe is Athens' strongest rival.

Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, the president of the Athens bid committee, believes her city now has its act together enough to deserve the Games ahead of Rome, Stockholm, Cape Town and Buenos Aires.

"We want the Olympic Games on merit, not by right," she said.

"We don't want them as some honorary award because they were founded here a million years ago and were re-started in Athens in 1896. We want them because we can handle them."

Athens has economic, environmental and political problems, however. A new metro system is mooted to be in place by 2004 as is a

new motorway and a new international airport terminal.

The Greek capital, overcrowded with few green spaces, has huge pollution problems and its efforts have been undermined by a report from the European Investment Bank that it could incur huge debts by hosting the Games.

Athens says that 29 of its 39 competition sites already exist —

including the main stadium. There is widespread local support and the likelihood of good facilities.

It is likely to be extremely hot in Athens, however, and it was noteworthy that not one world record was set during the World Athletics Championship.

Baggio called up for squad duty

MILAN (AFP) — A delighted Roberto Baggio is hoping to guide Italy to the 1998 World Cup finals, after being called up by national coach Cesare Maldini for next week's game in Georgia.

Baggio ended a 19-month absence from the national team last April, when Maldini brought him back for the qualifier against Poland in

Naples.

"Maldini showed his faith in me when I was going through a difficult period. And now he's confirmed that at a time when I feel that I'm in even better shape, both technically and psychologically."

Baggio drew a sharp comparison between his unhappy final months at AC Milan under Arrigo Sacchi, who had also sidelined him from the national squad, and his time now under Bologna's Renzo Ulivieri.

"I wasn't playing much for AC Milan, and for various reasons my heart wasn't really in the training either," he said. "But here in Bologna, I'm training harder than I perhaps ever have in my life."

Italy need to win in Tbilisi next Wednesday to be sure of staying ahead of England in the European zone Group 2. Italy will then face Glenn Hoddle's men in Rome for the likely group decider on October 11.



Germany's Jürgen Klinsmann (R) talks to the German national soccer team coach Berti Vogts (L) during a practice of their team in Berlin. The German soccer team will play Portugal in a World Cup qualifying match on September 6 (Reuters photo)

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TANNIA HERSH

ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

41075 CAJ9 OA AK97432

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1♠ 2♦ 3♠ 4♠

What do you bid now?

A - Don't even think about bidding any number of clubs. A jump to three clubs is a preemptive action and two clubs can be passed. In the modern style there are two ways to make a underround force, either bid a new suit at the one-level, or redouble. Since you have no suit to bid at the one-level, you must redouble.

Q.2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

41075 CAJ9 OA AK97432

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1♠ 2♦ 3♠ 4♠

What do you bid now?

A - There is no textbook method to bid such a break hand. Our choice would be either a direct leap to six diamonds, or a slightly slower approach by first jump-shifting to two diamonds. We prefer the direct leap to six — why give the opponents room to find a cheap sacrifice?

Q.3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

41075 CAJ9 OA AK97432

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1♠ 2♦ 3♠ 4♠

What do you bid now?

A - At this vulnerability, partner should have a reasonable hand for the two-club overcall, so your side could well have play for game. It seems reasonable to make an invitational bid of two no trump.

Q.4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK1054 CA983 CJ5 472

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - There is a textbook means of inviting game with this hand. Start with a Stayman bid of two clubs, inquiring about a four-card major. If partner responds in a major, raise to the three-level to invite game. If partner denies a four-card major, bid two spades to show a five-card suit and invitational values. (With a weak hand and a five-card major, you simply bid your suit.)

Q.5 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

41075 CAJ9 OA AK97432

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1♠ 2♦ 3♠ 4♠

What do you bid now?

A - This is simply a matter of hand evaluation — do you raise to two spades or jump to three spades? Despite your lack of intermediates and possibly worthless minor-suit queen, your three aces are so powerful that we suggest you take the stronger action.

Q.6 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

41075 CAJ9 OA AK97432

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1♠ 2♦ 3♠ 4♠

What do you bid now?

A - You have only enough to invite game, not force. The way to do that with a balanced hand of 11-12 points and stoppers in the unbid suits is to jump to two no trump. With a minimum, partner is allowed to pass.

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NOTICE TO ALL CANADIANS

RECRUITMENT TO CANADIAN FOREIGN SERVICE AND THE CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CIDA)

The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Citizenship and Immigration and CIDA will be recruiting officers. Examinations will take place Saturday October 25, 1997. Qualified Canadians may apply at the Embassy before October 6 1997. (For info: 666 124)

AVIS AUX CANADIENS

RECRUTEMENT POUR LE MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES ET DU COMMERCE INTERNATIONAL ET L'AGENCE CANADIENNE POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT INTERNATIONAL (ACDI)

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Commerce International canadien, Citoyenneté et Immigration ainsi que l'ACDI recruteront de nouveaux agents. L'examen aura lieu le samedi 25 octobre 1997. Les Canadiens qualifiés peuvent s'inscrire à l'Ambassade jusqu'au 6 octobre 1997. (Pour info: 666-124)

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Israeli army destroys another Palestinian home near Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — The Israeli army demolished a Palestinian home near a bypass road used by Jewish settlers on the outskirts of this divided city on Wednesday, the families said.

A bulldozer guarded by Israeli soldiers tore down the home of the Burkan family, consisting of three one-room structures in which 12 people lived, on the bypass road connecting Jewish settlements south of Hebron, family members said.

Further down the same bypass road, the bulldozer tore down a storehouse built by Palestinians. The storehouse owner's wife, Najwa Sultan, shouted insults at the soldiers guarding the bulldozer.

The demolitions came a day after Israeli army bulldozers tore down four houses in villages near the northern West Bank town of Jenin, witnesses said.

The structures had been built without permits from Israeli occupation authorities. Such permits are almost never issued to Palestinians. Israeli authorities have demolished at least 60 Palestinian homes in a stepped-up campaign in the West Bank and east Jerusalem launched in early August.

A Palestinian human rights group accused Israel of "ethnic cleansing" in its house demolition campaign, saying it sought to clear West Bank areas of Palestinian residents ahead of annexing the areas in a final resolution with the Palestinians.

Since the peace process

began in 1993, Israeli authorities have torn down 513 "illegal" Palestinian homes, the Palestinian Society for Protection of Human Rights and the Environment said in a report on Wednesday.

"The aim of the Israeli government is to get rid of Palestinians from areas which it seeks to annex in any final status negotiations with the Palestinians," said the society's head Khader Shkeirat.

"This amounts to ethnic cleansing and, apart from the human tragedy of Palestinians losing their homes, it is a cynical tool being used to predetermine negotiations," Mr. Shkeirat told journalists in Jerusalem.

An Israeli lawyer from the society, Allegra Pacheco, said laws in the West Bank "make it nearly impossible for a Palestinian to get a building permit" in Area C, the 70 per cent of the West Bank controlled by the Israeli army.

Most of Area C is zoned as "agricultural land," where building is almost banned, under a 1942 zoning plan drawn up by the British Mandate authorities which Israel relies on in issuing permits to construct homes.

"This plan has not been altered since 1942 and does not reflect the increase of the Palestinian population since. Therefore existing towns cannot grow naturally into these areas," Pacheco said.

"Jewish settlements are built on the same land zoned for agriculture. But for them, the authorities change



Israeli soldiers watch a bulldozer as it rips through a Palestinian-owned structure used for storing machinery as the building is demolished Wednesday. A Palestinian human rights group said that Israel has demolished 513 buildings owned by Palestinians since the Oslo peace accords were signed between Israel and the PLO in 1993 (Reuters photo)

the zoning plans for residential building," she said. "So while Jewish settlements are allowed 'natural expansion,' Palestinian towns are not," she said. Over 1,000 Palestinian

homes have outstanding demolition orders against them issued in the past few years — more than 700 of them issued since Mr. Netanyahu came to power, according to Mr. Shkeirat.

Chief U.N. arms inspector will visit Iraq this Friday

BAGHDAD (R) — United Nations arms envoy Richard Butler will arrive in Iraq Friday to assess results of a month-long inspection of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, a U.N. official said Wednesday.

Jo Lomas, special assistant to the director of the Baghdad Ongoing Monitoring and Verification (OMV) Centre, said Mr. Butler — chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) — would meet Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz before he leaves Tuesday.

Ms. Lomas said Mr. Butler would evaluate the results of

a month-long arms inspection which he had agreed on with Mr. Aziz late in July.

Some six U.N. inspection teams have visited Iraq since then and carried out several inspections and met with Iraqi officials.

"No major incident has taken place," Ms. Lomas told reporters.

She said Mr. Butler would submit in October a report to the U.N. Security Council on what has been achieved so far on the destruction of Iraq's biological, missile and chemical weapons programmes.

Head of OMV Nils Carlstrom said last week the

teams who visited Iraq over the last month had completed "very important" work to close remaining gaps in Iraq's prohibited weapons.

Ms. Lomas said Mr. Butler, in charge of dismantling Iraq's prohibited weapons, would be accompanied by his deputy Charles Duelfer, Russian ballistic missile expert Nikita Smidovich and five other experts.

UNSCOM must certify that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction before the U.N. lifts curbs on Iraqi oil exports, although Baghdad is allowed limited oil exports under a humanitarian deal.

Security Council to decide on 'oil-for-food' deal funds

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council is expected to reach a compromise arrangement enabling Iraq to recover funds from an oil-for-food deal, Western diplomats said Tuesday.

Portuguese Ambassador Antonio Monteiro told reporters that the Sanctions Committee was handing over the issue to the Security Council, after the committee failed to reach consensus at a meeting on Tuesday.

He declined further comment, but diplomats said that experts of the 15-member U.N. Security Council were expected on Wednesday to discuss a new draft resolution which would enable Iraq to obtain the full amount of funds from the oil-for-food agreement.

The oil-for-food deal, which the Security Council renewed June 4 for a second

six-month period, provides for Iraq to export one billion dollars worth of oil every three months to pay for humanitarian supplies for its sanctions-hit people.

But following an Iraqi suspension of oil exports to protest delays in delivery of supplies, Baghdad has been able to export only a projected \$600 million worth of oil by the end of the current three-month period which ends on September 5.

Until now, the U.S. has maintained that the arrangement should be respected according to the letter, thus depriving Iraq of around \$400 million from the oil sales.

But Western diplomats said that a compromise needed to be found because the oil profits, in addition to buying the humanitarian supplies, are also used to pay compensation for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the operating

costs of U.N. arms inspectors. Iraq has been under U.N. trade sanctions since the 1990 invasion.

Western diplomats said that the Security Council could adopt a technical resolution to solve the solution, but that Britain and the U.S. were pressing for a text which would also blame Iraq for the current situation.

Meanwhile, Iraq blames Washington for Sanctions Committee delays in approving the humanitarian contracts. Mr. Monteiro said that he hoped a solution could be found before the current three-month period expires on Friday. "I have elements to believe that there is a good atmosphere," he said.

Mr. Monteiro discussed the issue later Tuesday with U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson, whose country presides over the council in September.

Royals condemned for silence amid national outpouring of grief for Di

LONDON (AFP) — The British royal family's icy reserve since the death of Princess Diana, Princess of Wales, amid a spectacular national outpouring of grief, has prompted warnings that the royals must modernise to safeguard their future.

Since Buckingham Palace's brief statement Sunday that Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles were "deeply shocked and distressed" by the news, the royals have maintained a stony silence.

In contrast, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people have come to pay their respects to the young woman praised by Prime Minister Tony Blair as the "People's Princess."

The funeral on Saturday morning is expected to draw more than a million people onto London's streets, lining the path of the funeral procession, in an unprecedented show of public mourning in Britain.

The royal family, which this week has remained out of the public eye at Balmoral in Scotland, is seen as dangerously out of touch with common people.

"Where are the words and gestures to reassure us that the royal family are capable of caring like ordinary people do? Or more importantly, in the way Princess Diana so openly did?" asked Britain's biggest paper, The Sun.

Princess Diana offered a common touch, seen to be lacking in other royals, and opened up the House of Windsor to the aspirations of a wide and adoring public.

The Queen, who has retained strong popular appeal and enjoys respect for an unstinting commitment to her royal role, has not been openly criticised.

But Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne, has come under strong attack for his cold demeanour in the face of the tragedy.

"People were appalled at the stiff upper lip pictures of him taking the princes to church at Balmoral on

Sunday," the Express tabloid wrote.

Just hours after learning of their mother's death, Princes William, 15, next in line to the throne after Prince Charles, and Prince Harry, 12, had to hide their emotions as they were paraded through a waiting press pack and taken to a church service near Balmoral.

Charles's personal manner, which has always seemed aloof and self-consciously royal, has never endeared him to his subjects.

Reform or die, has been the message that some commentators have sought to impress upon the monarchy.

"Perhaps one lesson at least will be taken from her (Princess Diana's) life, that whatever else royalty stands for, it must, in the modern world, know how to stay in tune with the popular mood," The Financial Times commented.

Queen Elizabeth II herself called for reform of the monarchy in the wake of her "annus horribilis" in 1992, when Charles and Princess Diana separated and the Duke and Duchess of York were divorced.

But Princess Diana up until now provided the only real stimulus for change.

Her legacy now rests with William and Harry. But the Independent warned: "If the Princes grow up more like their father than their mother, the people, who have changed so much already, will not recognise them as belonging to the same country."

Bringing the monarchy more in line with modern times is of vital urgency. A recent survey showed that for the first time, less than half of British subjects (48 per cent) were opposed to the abolition of the monarchy.

"If they (the royals) fail to heed her lesson, they will bury not just Princess Diana on Saturday — but their future too," The Guardian broadsheet warned.

Princes to be in London Friday, ahead of funeral

LONDON (AFP) — The Prince of Wales, Prince William and Prince Harry will fly to London on Friday, and will visit the Royal Chapel at St. James's Palace where Diana, Princess of Wales, is lying in peace, Buckingham Palace said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen mother will travel by train overnight Friday from the family's Scottish retreat in Balmoral to be in London for Diana's funeral Saturday morning.

"All the royal family, especially the Prince of Wales, Prince William and Prince Harry, are taking strength from the overwhelming support of the public, who are sharing their tremendous sense of loss and grief. They are deeply touched and enormously grateful," a palace spokesman said.

Buckingham Palace refused to confirm press reports here that Prince William will walk behind his mother's coffin when the cortege leaves St. James's Palace for a funeral service in

Westminster Abbey. Reports said that the 15-year-old prince wanted to make the mile-long journey on foot, in the belief that this is what his mother, killed in a high speed road crash in Paris last Sunday, would have wanted.

The two sons of Diana are set to inherit \$32 million under the terms of her will, a press report said Wednesday.

The sum will be split evenly between Prince William who is second in line to the British throne, and Prince Harry, 12, according to the Daily Telegraph.

But the money, the bulk of which comes from the divorce settlement she received last year from Prince Charles, will be held in trust for them until they are 25-years-old, the paper reported.

It said one of the two trustees appointed to look after the funds is believed to be the princess's eldest sister, Lady Jane Fellowes. Several of the diamonds Diana received when she married Charles in 1981 will be returned to the royal family, the Telegraph noted.

Dodi's father fights back at accusations on responsibility

LONDON (AFP) — Mohammad Fayed, the father of Princess Diana's companion who died with her in the Paris car crash, on Tuesday fought back at allegations that the driver had been drinking and was speeding.

As six paparazzi and a motorcycle dispatch rider were charged with manslaughter in Paris, Mr. Fayed's spokesman said the family had no evidence that Henri Paul was drunk, denied he had dared the press to catch him, and said, contrary to reports, that the crashed car's speedometer was pointing at zero.

Stressing that Paul had

been off duty until recalled to the Ritz hotel when Diana, 36, and her companion Dodi Fayed, 42, unexpectedly decided to dine there.

Mr. Fayed's spokesman said: "In the hotel he [Paul] spoke to a number of members of staff, none of whom detected any smell of drink or any other signs to suggest he had been drinking."

"The allegations that Paul taunted the press as he drove away from the front of the hotel are untrue... contrary to press reports the speedometer was not stuck at approximately 190 kilometres per hour. Instead the needle was pointing at zero."

Annan calls Algeria's premier to 'explain' situation in country

ALGIERS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan telephoned Algerian President Liamine Zerroual to "explain and clarify" comments he had made about the situation in the troubled North African nation, Mr. Zerroual's office said.

No details on what Mr. Annan said were immediately disclosed, but in a statement the office said Mr. Zerroual reminded Mr. Annan that Algeria rejects any outside involvement in its five-year conflict with Islamic radicals that has claimed more than 60,000 lives.

Mr. Zerroual also told the U.N. chief that Algeria "today has strong institutions which are themselves capable of bringing about a definitive end to the crisis," the statement said.

Algeria's troubles, he said, "can only be resolved by Algerians themselves, outside of all foreign involvement, no matter what the source," Mr. Zerroual was reported as saying.

On Tuesday, U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard, speaking after Algerian authorities sent a protest note to the United Nations, denied Mr. Annan had said that the Algerian unrest "could no longer be regarded as an internal affair."

"But he did feel that he had to raise a moral voice against the bloodshed, and invited dialogue to that end," Mr. Eckhard said at a news briefing at U.N. headquarters in New York.

"The secretary-general has consistently condemned all forms of terrorism, wherever they might occur," Mr. Eckhard added.

Speaking in Venice Saturday, Mr. Annan notably said he hoped "we can find ways and means of encouraging the parties to cease the violence."

"We are dealing with a situation which for a long time has been treated as an internal affair," Mr. Annan said.

"As the killing goes on and the numbers of victims rise, it is extremely difficult for all of us to pretend that it is not happening, that we do not know about it and that we should leave the Algerian population to their lot."

Islamic militant leader Abassi Madani immediately wrote to Mr. Annan saying he was "ready to launch a call to halt the spilling of blood immediately and prepare the opening of a serious dialogue."

Mr. Madani was placed under house arrest after sending the letter, which according to Mr. Eckhard was received by the United Nations in Geneva. The letter, in Arabic, was being translated, Mr. Eckhard added.

Mr. Madani is the head of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), who was conditionally released in July after serving half of a 12-year jail term for threatening state security.

In Geneva, veteran Algerian opposition activist Hocine Ait Ahmed said Wednesday that he had sent a letter to Mr. Annan, urging the United Nations to play a role in ending the bloodshed in his country. Speaking to journalists, Mr. Ait Ahmed, who leads the Socialist Forces Front (FSS) and lives in exile in Switzerland, said he wanted the United Nations to help Algeria find a "peaceful and democratic way" out of the violence.

In his letter, dated Tuesday, he pleaded with Mr. Annan to urgently send a "special delegate" to the North African nation, and to set up a commission of inquiry into a wave of massacres blamed on Islamic fanatics.

Such bloodshed, he wrote, "put the international community face-to-face with crimes against humanity."

Conspiracy theories flourish on Internet

NEW YORK (R) — A flurry of bizarre conspiracy theories have sprouted on the Internet and crept into some news media about the death of princess Diana, most of them morbid and many provably wrong.

Within hours of her death in a Paris car crash, conspiracy theories began appearing on the Internet, including one assertion that she hadn't died at all and was faking her death to escape the media.

Others had her rubbed out by the makers of landmines, which Diana had long campaigned to ban worldwide, or by people intent on keeping her from marrying an Arab Muslim, Dodi Fayed.

"I'm just sort of flabbergasted at the early speculation over the untimely death of Princess Diana and her companion," New York author and conspiracy expert Gerald Posner said in a telephone interview.

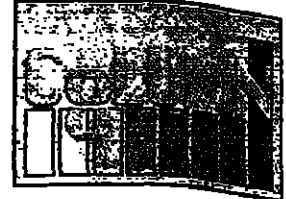
The theories, many based on pure speculation and the few facts to emerge from the accident, are ricocheting around the world-spanning Internet on online services such as America Online, and some are being reported by more traditional media.

One web site titled "Conspiracy Theory Discussion Board" asked the question: "What really happened to Princess Diana and her love interest, Dodi Fayed?" "Were they really 'forced off the road'?" the site asked. "Was it really by the 'paparazzi'?" would the

palace have really stood for the mother of the future king [and future head of the Church of England] to have married a Muslim???"

"Has this tragedy paved the way for England's sympathies to go with Charles and Camilla [Parker-Bowles]... Camilla who could never become Princess of Wales so long as Diana was living?"

After more questions, the reader is invited to join in a discussion of the various conspiracy theories — for a \$9.95 subscription fee. An attempt to contact people involved with the site, <http://www.navigation-station.com/princess-diana-conspiracy.htm>, by electronic mail was not successful.



Hindus worship dog as 'reincarnation' of holy man

BOMBAY (AFP) — A Hindu cult near Bombay is worshipping a pet dog as the "reincarnation" of a holy man who died many years ago, a newspaper said Wednesday. The Asian Age said a two-year-old white Pomeranian, named "Sai" after the holy man, was the object of worship at Panvel town. On Thursdays, devotees gather for "blessings" from Sai, who is fitted out with saffron cloth. The Age said the dog worship had its roots in a legend, according to which Sai Baba, the Hindu holy man, appeared before his devotees in the form of a dog in order to test them. Sai, the dog, sleeps in an air-conditioned room.

Thais choose between free egg or new constitution

BANGKOK (R) — If eggs are any barometer, Thailand's new draft constitution wins the heart of the people. In a strange test of support and interest in the country's latest political test, motorists have shown they care more about a constitutional change than food — normally something very close to a Thai's heart. "During the past three days" promotion, motorists have taken 50,000 copies of the draft constitution — four times the number of those taking eggs," Siriporn Thamasawat, promotion manager of Bangkok Petroleum, told Reuters on Wednesday.

Lennon's ex-wife signs \$80m film deal

NEW YORK (AFP) — Yoko Ono is closing an \$80 million deal with Columbia Pictures to make a movie of her relationship with the late Beatle John Lennon, the New York Post daily said. Studio sources said Ono wants to give her version of her years with Lennon and counter descriptions of writers such as Albert Goldman, who declared Lennon was an "autistic, schizophrenic, bisexual, manic depressive, as well as a child-abusing wife-beater whose marriage was a sham."

Lost World reels in \$500 million in first 3 months

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Steven Spielberg's "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" has rung up more than \$500 million since its release three months ago. Daily Variety said. More than half the box office receipts, or \$274.6 million, came from the dinosaur film's showings outside the United States the paper said. It is still too early to tell if the sequel will outperform "Jurassic Park," which set an all-time record of \$913.1 million in world box office ticket sales since its release in June 1993.

Chinese film on happiness through capitalism viewed in Venice festival

VENICE (AFP) — Chinese film maker Zhang Yimou, attending the Venice film festival to present his controversial film "Keep Cool," said he was taking part in the event without official approval in an interview Wednesday. Defying the ban which prevented him from showing the film at the Cannes film festival in May, Zhang on Tuesday attended the Venice screening of "Keep Cool," which tells of a modern quest for happiness based on money, mobile telephones and other gadgets. Zhang said he had travelled to Venice without the approval of Chinese authorities and could not rule out reports